OPINION: LEFT IN LIMBO P.24 | FEATURES: SECOND CICG ORCHID AWARDS P.38

BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.68 NO.23 JUNE 5, 2025

北京周报 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

ADDING A NEW LAYER

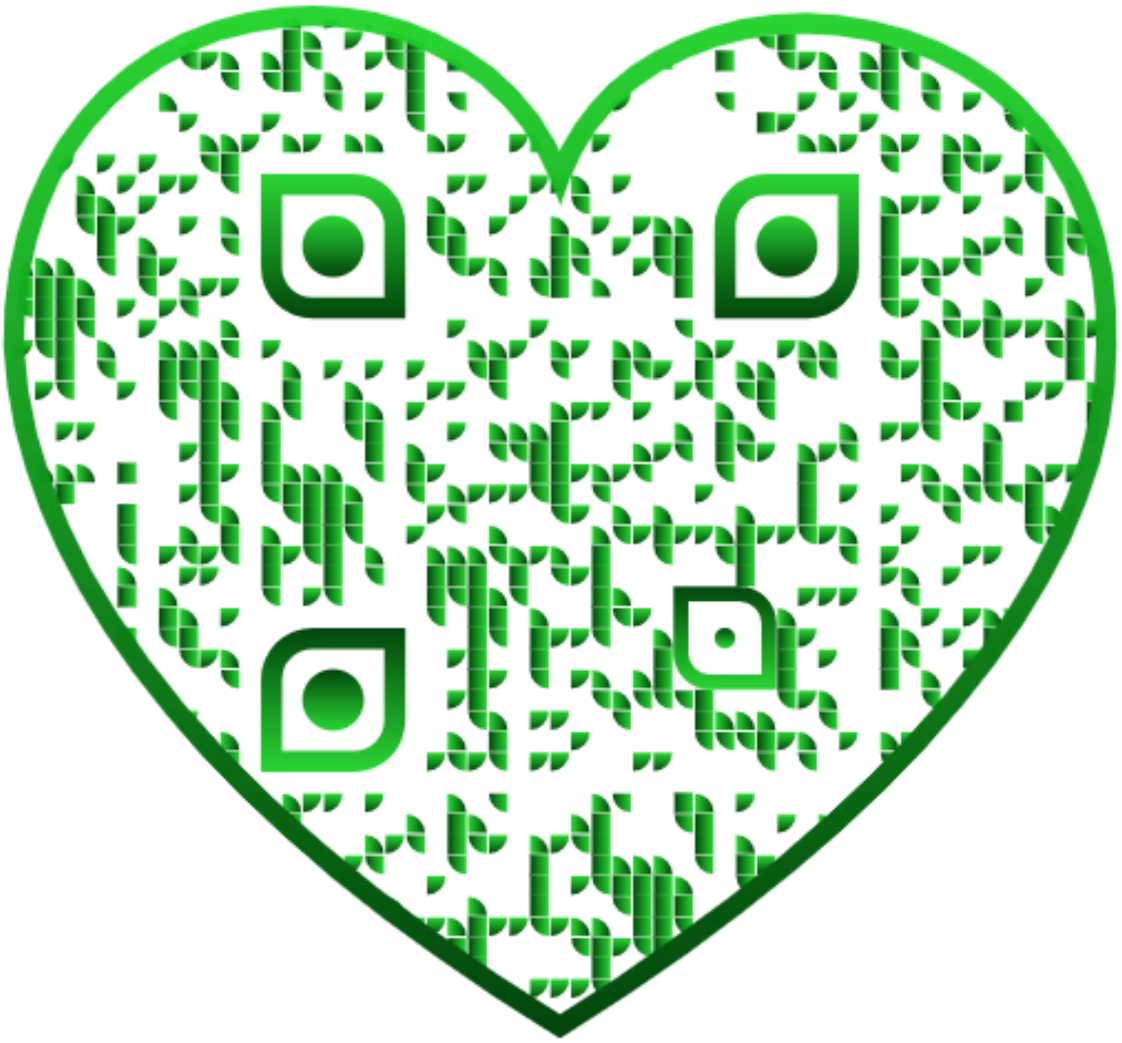
Decoding China's five-year plan for future growth

RMB9.00
USD1.70
AUD3.00
GBP1.20
CAD2.60
CHF2.60
JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140

9 771000 914253 23

邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2



Follow CICG Americas

And get in on the conversation

BeijingReview

BeijingReview

@BeijingReview

China Hoy

China Hoje

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S DESK

02 Planning for the Next Five Years

THIS WEEK

COVER STORY

12 Playing the Long Game
A new plan outlining medium- to long-term economic and social progress

OPINION

16 Truce Over Tariffs
Cooperation must prevail in China-U.S. relations

20 Healing a Fractured International System
International Organization for Mediation established in Hong Kong

22 A New Vision for Fission
China-Russia cooperation on nuclear energy

24 No One Wins
Banishing Harvard's international students is all pain and no gain

25 Concrete and Community: Advancing Urban Renewal
A hi-tech, high-touch revolution is underway in cities nationwide

FEATURES

28 Navigating a Global Crossroads
Why the future belongs to the "multi-aligned"

30 Land-Linked Partners
Trade fair promotes partnerships with Central and Eastern Europe

32 From Kilns to Commerce
Changsha's pioneering role in trade with Africa

34 Past Perfect
How China's museums became cultural powerhouses

36 The Luster of Sustainability
A freshwater pearl farming system centered on "fish-mussel co-culture"

38 From Ancient Wonders to New Energy
Orchid Awards judges on tour in Sichuan and Chongqing

40 From Humble to Hi-Tech
Hefei's quantum leap to innovation

42 My Wedding, My Way
Chinese youth are rewriting the rules of "I do"

CULTURE

46 Celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival
More than 2,000 years of sticky rice dumplings

FORUM

48 Reversing Outdated Escalator Etiquette

Cover Design: Cui Xiaodong

©2025 Beijing Review, all rights reserved.

MEDIA PARTNER
www.bjreview.com zinio amazon Follow us on
BREAKING NEWS » SCAN ME » Using a QR code reader
Please recycle

北京周报
BEIJING REVIEW
A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

President: Li Yafang
Associate Editor in Chief: Liu Yunyun
Vice Presidents: He Peng, Gao Dingbo, Yu Shujun
Program Supervisor: Zeng Wenhui

Executive Editor: Yan Wei
Production Director: Yao Bin
Editors: Wang Hairong, Zhang Shasha, Lu Yan
Researcher: Lan Xinzhen
Editorial Consultants: Elsbeth van Paridon, G.P. Wilson
Reporters: Ji Jing, Kang Caiqi, Li Qing, Li Wenhan, Li Xiaoyang, Liang Xiao, Ma Miaomiao, Pan Xiaoqiao, Peng Jiawei, Tao Xing, Tao Zihui, Wang Jun, Wang Ruohan, Yuan Yuan, Zhang Yage
Photographer: Wei Yao
Art: Li Shigong
Design Director: Wang Yajuan
Chief Designer: Cui Xiaodong
Designer: Wang Boyan

Editorial Administrator: Zeng Wenhui
Planning Director: Xu Bei
Deputy Planning Director: Li Nan
World News Director: Ding Ying
Director of Digital Media: Li Fangfang
Director of Strategic Research: Zan Jifang
Deputy Director of Strategic Research: Lu Ling

Administration: Zhang Yajie
International Cooperation: Sun Xuan
Legal Counsel: Yue Cheng

North America Bureau (New York City)
Chief: Yu Shujun
Executive Assistant: Zhao Wei
Tel/Fax: 1-201-792-0334
E-mail: yushujun@cicgamericas.com
Latin America Bureau (Mexico City)
Chief: Miao Ye
Tel: 52-55-55127271
Fax: 52-55-55332027
E-mail: chinahoymx@gmail.com
Peru Office (Lima)
Chief: Meng Kexin
Tel: 0051-959212702
E-mail: revistachinaperu@gmail.com

General Editorial Office
Tel: 86-10-68996252
Fax: 86-10-68326628
Editorial Desk
Tel: 86-10-68996250
Partnerships
Tel: 86-10-68995807
E-mail: yecong@cicgamericas.com
Distribution
Tel: 86-10-68310644
E-mail: circulation@cicgamericas.com

Published every Thursday by
CICG Center for Americas, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,
Beijing 100037, China
Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,
Beijing 100044, China
Tel: 86-10-68413849, 1-416-497-8096 (Canada)
Fax: 86-10-68412166
E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn
Website: http://www.cibtc.com
General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:
Peace Book Co. Ltd.
17/Fl, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK
Tel: 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is published weekly in the United States for US$64.00 per year by Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080
News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*, Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

Planning for the Next Five Years

China is in the process of drafting its 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development covering the period of 2026-30. The document will serve as one of the major roadmaps toward China's goal of modernization by 2035. As part of the drafting process, a one-month online public consultation began on May 20, with the collected opinions and suggestions to be summarized and provided as reference for decision-making by the central leadership.

China's five-year plans are formulated on the principles of sound, democratic and law-based decision-making. In May, President Xi Jinping provided core instructions on the work concerning the compilation of the new plan, emphasizing the need to continue adhering to these principles to create a strategic blueprint that integrates top-level design with advice sought from the public. Earlier, in late April, Xi convened a symposium in Shanghai to outline the overall requirements, determine the goals and tasks and propose approaches and measures for the plan.

The use of medium- and long-term plans to guide economic and social development is a distinct advantage of China's system of governance, providing the continuity and stability necessary for the successful achievement of visionary goals. In 1985, Xi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Xiamen Municipal Committee and Executive Vice Mayor of Xiamen, Fujian Province, led the formulation of the city's development strategy for the period until 2000, giving an early demonstration of his ability to combine visionary foresight with practical governance. Many of the ideas and measures in the plan were innovative and forward-looking, such as the clear statement that while developing the economy, it is essential to maintain ecological balance.

Global transformations unseen in a century are unfolding at an ever-increasing pace, and the world finds itself in a new period of turbulence and change, with frequent occurrence of risk events that greatly increase uncertainties.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan will focus on the future and commit to achieving new breakthroughs in science and technology innovation, industrial upgrading, green development and people's wellbeing, according to available information.

The plan, adapting China's development efforts to changing situations, is vital not only for ensuring the continued success of China's modernization drive, but also for the stable development of the global economy. **BR**

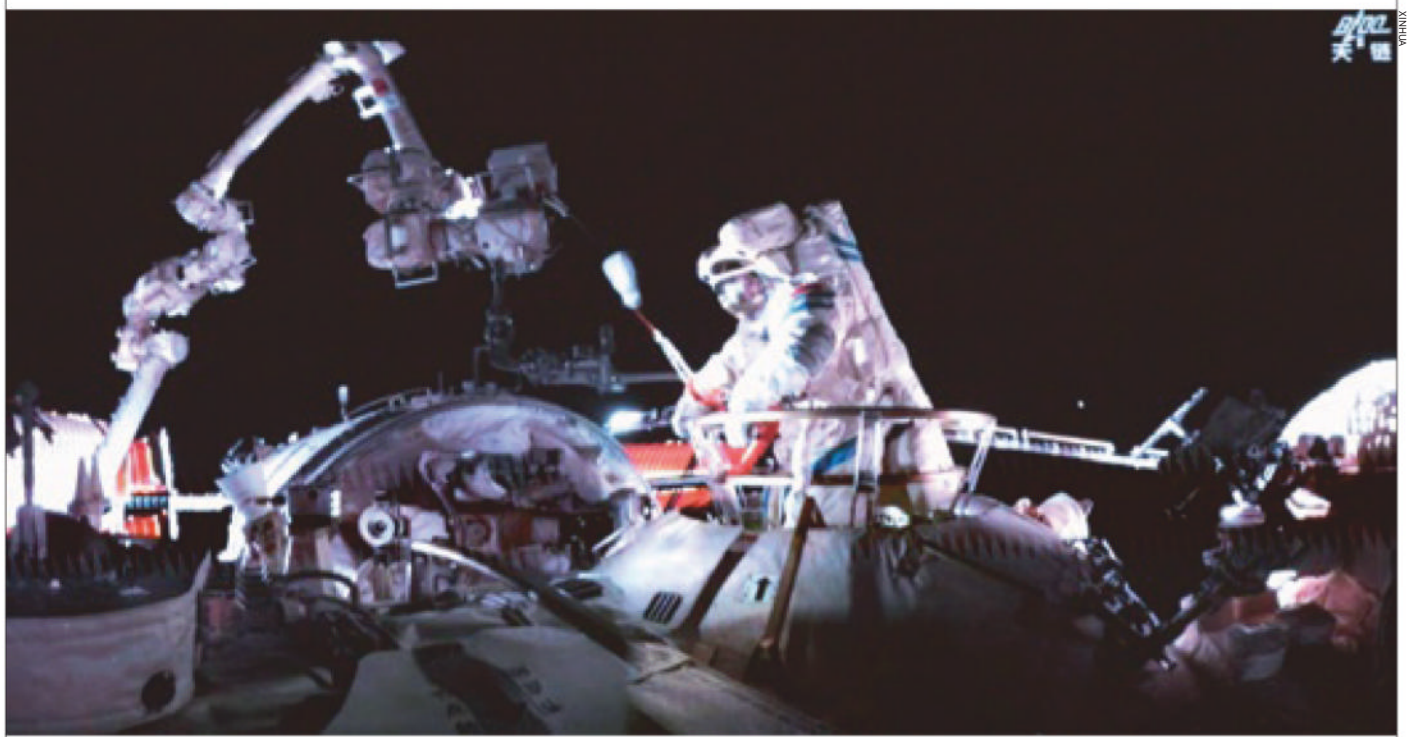
WRITE TO US

Send an e-mail: editorsoffice@cicgamericas.com

Please provide your name and address along with your submissions. Submissions may be edited.

CHINA.....RMB9.00 U.S.A.....USD1.70
AUSTRALIA.....AUD3.00 UK.....GBP1.20
CANADA.....CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND.....CHF2.60
JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EUR1.90
TÜRKIYE.....YTL5.00 HK.....HKD9.30 NEPAL.....RS40

主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局
主办单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）
出版单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）
地址：北京市西城区百万庄大街24号 邮编：100037
编委会：李雅芳 贺鹏 王宁 刘云云 高丁博 于淑均 曾文卉
主任：李雅芳
主编：闫威
总编室电话：(010) 68996252 发行部电话：(010) 68310644
印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司
北京周报 英文版2025年 第23期 ISSN 1000-9140
国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922
广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证第733号
国内零售价：人民币9.00元



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Shenzhou-20 taikonaut Chen Dong performs extravehicular activities outside China's orbiting *Tiangong* space station on May 22.

Three *Shenzhou-20* crew members on board *Tiangong* worked for about eight hours and completed their mission's first series of extravehicular activities that day, assisted by ground crews at the mission control center. They installed a debris protection device and inspected and maintained external equipment.

XINHUA

Locally Born Cubs

Female giant panda cub Jia Jia plays at the Ocean Park Hong Kong in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on May 27. The first locally-born giant panda cubs were named Jia Jia and De De, the park announced that same day. The pair were born last August and their parents are Ying Ying and Le Le, the giant pandas gifted by the Central Government to the SAR.

Asteroid Mission

China launched its first asteroid sample-return mission, *Tianwen-2*, on May 29, an endeavour to shed light on the formation and evolution of asteroids and the early solar system.

Atop a Long March-3B carrier rocket, the probe lifted off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province in southwest China.

The mission aims to achieve multiple goals over a decade-long expedition: collecting samples from the near-Earth asteroid 2016HO3 and exploring the main-belt comet 311P, which is more distant than Mars.

Shan Zhongde, head of the China National Space Administration, stated that the *Tianwen-2* mission represents a momentous step in China's new journey of interplanetary exploration.

Smoking Rate Decline

Beijing has reduced its adult smoking rate to 19.2 percent among residents aged 15 and older, reflecting a 4.2-percent decline since the city implemented strict tobacco control measures a decade ago, according to municipal health authorities.

Data from the Beijing Municipal Health Commission revealed notable gender disparities, with male smoking rates at 34.5 percent compared with 3.3 percent for women. Smoking prevalence remains highest among those aged 45 to 64 (22.9 percent) and lowest in the 15 to 24 age group (9.4 percent). The findings underscore progress made under Beijing's tough smoking ban, enacted in 2015, which prohibits smoking in all indoor public places, workplaces and public transportation throughout the city.

A health impact assessment co-led by the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and the Beijing Center for Disease Prevention and Control projected the regulation has averted hundreds of thousands of smoking-related hospitalizations.

Bolstering Employment

On May 26, China introduced a guideline aimed at providing more "accessible, equitable and professional" public services to bolster employment.

The guideline, issued by five state organizations, including the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, outlines 20 measures to advance fairness, inclusiveness and the use of digital technologies.

Specifically, each provincial-level region should improve service standardization by developing a unified public service catalog, the guideline says, adding that services across different regions should be further coordinated.

The guideline also stresses the importance of publishing employment information, while calling for the "proactive and timely inclusion" of those facing employment difficulties in assistance programs.

China's job market has remained generally stable recently, with the surveyed urban unemployment rate on average down from 5.2 percent in March to 5.1 percent in April, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Dietary Guidelines

China's national nutrition and health steering committee has released a set of dietary guidelines aimed at promoting healthier eating habits among the population and addressing the country's growing obesity problem, Xinhua News Agency reported on May 24.

The new guidance advocates the increased consumption of three key food categories — vegetables and fruit, whole grain and aquatic products.

The guidelines emphasize the importance of including vegetables in every meal and consuming fruit daily. Specifically, adults are encouraged to eat at least 300 grams of fresh vegetables each day, with dark-colored vegetables accounting for more than half of the total. Fresh fruit intake

should range from 200 to 350 grams per day.

The latest dietary guidance comes amid growing concern over rising obesity rates. Data from the National Health Commission show that the combined overweight and obesity rate among Chinese adults has reached 51.2 percent. Without intervention, this figure could surpass 70 percent by 2030.

Nuclear Power Units

Construction of two new nuclear power units, utilizing domestically designed third-generation *Hualong One* nuclear technology, began on May 23 in the southern Chinese port city of Fangchenggang in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, marking the beginning of a major expansion of the country's key nuclear energy base.

The new No.5 and No.6 units at the Fangchenggang Nuclear Power Station will each have a capacity of over 1.2 million kilowatts (kw) and are expected to generate a combined 20 billion kilowatt-hours (kwh) of electricity annually upon completion, according to the Guangxi Fangchenggang Nuclear Power Co. Ltd.

The Fangchenggang project plans to have six nuclear power units in total. The first two units became operational in 2016, while the No.3 and No.4 units, both using *Hualong One*, entered service in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

By the end of March 2025, the four operating units at Fangchenggang had generated more than 160 billion kwh of electricity, equivalent to saving over 48 million tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 131 million tons.

Once fully completed, the Fangchenggang nuclear power base will boast a total installed capacity of 6.9 million kw and an annual electricity output of 53 billion kwh.

Experts say the expansion will greatly contribute to Guangxi's energy transition and high-quality economic development.

Winter Sports Training Center

Harbin in Heilongjiang Province, host city of the Ninth Asian Winter Games in February, is developing a world-class winter sports training center aimed at boosting the development of winter sports across Asia, Xinhua reported on May 23.

The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) praised the successful hosting of the games in February and proposed designating Harbin's ice venues and nearby Yabuli's snow facilities as a premier training hub. On the second day of the 45th OCA General Assembly in Kuwait on May 12, the OCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Chinese Olympic Committee and the Municipal Government of Harbin. According to the MoU, the three sides will build the training center together.

XINHUA

Cultivating Success

A staff member checks the growth of young durian trees at a durian industry park in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, Hainan Province, on May 24. Baoting is developing its durian growing industry and continuously expanding the area under cultivation. As of late 2024, the durian growing area in Baoting was 666.7 hectares.

XINHUA

Celebrating Biodiversity

A performance during the International Day for Biological Diversity Event 2025 in Yichun City, Heilongjiang Province, on May 22. The forests surrounding Yichun boast rich biological diversity and beautiful scenery.

Modern Corporate Systems

In an ongoing push to make Chinese enterprises "more dynamic, resilient and competitive," Chinese authorities on May 26 made public a guideline on refining the country's modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features.

The document was released by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's highest state administrative organ.

China expects to establish a modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features in eligible enterprises in about five years so that they can maximize their roles in promoting innovation, supporting industrial upgrade and fulfilling their social responsibilities, the guideline said.

By 2035, China shall see a more refined modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features, which will boost the global competitiveness of Chinese enterprises and lay a solid foundation for building world-class companies.

The document devoted a special chapter to enhancing incentive mechanisms for innovation within enterprises, outlining specific measures to innovate organizational structures, optimize resource allocation efficiency and refine the design of incentive systems.

It also called for efforts to leverage the role of capital markets in enhancing corporate governance. Listed companies are encouraged to bring in institutional investors holding over 5-percent stakes as active shareholders. Moreover, the information disclosure system in the governance of listed companies shall be improved to promote sound decision-making.

Industrial Firm Growth

Profits of China's industrial firms with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan ($2.8 million) increased by 1.4 percent year on year in the first four months of the year, up from a rise of 0.8 percent in the first quarter (Q1), data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on May 27.

In April alone, profits grew by 3 percent compared to the same period last year.

Profits increased in nearly 60 percent of major industrial sectors, with 23 out of 41 categories posting year-on-year profit growth, the NBS said.

From January to April, profits in equipment manufacturing rose by 11.2 percent year on year, up 4.8 percentage points from Q1. The sector contributed 3.6 percentage points to overall profit growth among large industrial firms.

Hi-tech manufacturing also recorded faster growth, with profits rising by 9 percent year on year during the period. The ongoing shift toward high-end manufacturing fueled profit increases of 24.3 percent in biopharmaceuticals and 27 percent in aircraft manufacturing.

The country's AI Plus initiative continued to gain traction, driving strong profit growth across related industries. Profits in semiconductor equipment manufacturing more than doubled, while integrated circuit producers saw a 42.2-percent increase.

Smart technology manufacturers also delivered strong performances, with profits in in-vehicle smart devices, unmanned aerial vehicles and wearable tech rising by 177.4 percent, 167.9 percent and 80.9 percent, respectively.

Foreign-Invested Enterprises

In the first four months of 2025, 18,832 new foreign-invested enterprises were established in the Chinese mainland, representing a year-on-year growth of 12.1 percent, the Ministry of Commerce said on May 23.

From January to April, foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Chinese mainland in actual use totaled 320.78 billion yuan ($45 billion), down 10.9 percent year on year, according to the ministry.

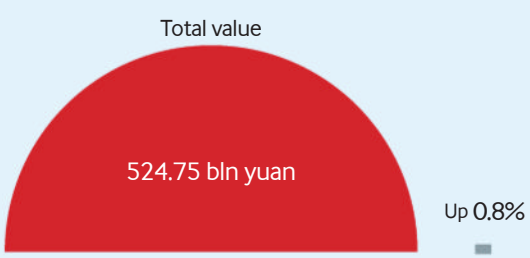
The actual use of FDI during

NUMBERS

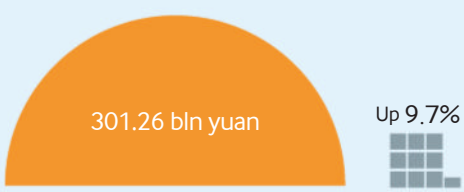
China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-April

(All growth rates are y.o.y.; $1=7.19 yuan as of May 29)

Service outsourcing contracts inked by firms in China



Offshore service outsourcing contract value



the period came in at 84.06 billion yuan ($11.8 billion) in the manufacturing industry and at 231.25 billion yuan ($32 billion) in the services industry.

FDI inflow in the hi-tech industries reached 96.71 billion yuan ($13.4 billion), with FDI rising by 137 percent in the e-commerce services sector, 86.2 percent in the aerospace equipment manufacturing sector, 57.8 percent in the chemical pharmaceutical manufacturing sector and 4.9 percent in the medical instrument and equipment manufacturing sector.

Investment from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states increased by 42.9 percent year on year during the period, and that from Japan rose by 74.2 percent, according to ministry data. Investment from Switzerland grew by 68.4 percent, from the United Kingdom by 54.6 percent, from the Republic of Korea by 22.3 percent and from Germany by 12.3 percent.

Hydropower Capacity

China's reservoirs and dams rank first globally in both number and installed capacity, according to the 28th Congress of the International Commission on Large Dams, held in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province on May 10-23.

According to data from the National Energy Administration, China had constructed more than 94,000 dams by December 2024—the largest number globally—and the country's total installed hydropower capacity had reached 436 million kilowatts, including 377 million kilowatts of conventional hydropower.

Annual hydropower generation comes in at 1.42 trillion kilowatt-hours, accounting for 57 percent of China's total renewable energy output, official figures show.

China's total reservoir storage capacity is approaching 1 trillion cubic meters, including a flood control capacity of over 185.6 billion cubic meters. Reservoirs supply 270 billion cubic meters of water annually and support the cultivation of about 35.5 million hectares of farmland.

China-ASEAN Trade Negotiations

China and the 10 ASEAN countries have fully completed negotiations on the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA), the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said on May 21.

The achievement was announced during a special online meeting of economic and trade ministers from China and ASEAN countries on May 20, according to the ministry.

The CAFTA 3.0 will send a strong signal in support of free trade and open cooperation, an MOFCOM official said, noting that the agreement will inject greater certainty into regional and global trade, and serve as a model for openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation.

The negotiations, which began in November 2022, concluded in October 2024 after nine rounds of formal talks.

The upgraded agreement introduces nine new chapters covering areas such as the digital economy, green economy and supply chain connectivity, MOFCOM said.

The CAFTA 3.0 will become a modern, comprehensive and mutually beneficial free trade agreement, as these additions will facilitate deeper regional economic integration and enhance industrial and supply chain integration between the two major developing economies under new circumstances, it added.

Moreover, the CAFTA 3.0 will provide important institutional guarantees for building a China-ASEAN mega market, while supplying lasting momentum for building the China-ASEAN community with a shared future and promoting common prosperity and development for both sides, the ministry said.

Both sides will actively advance their respective domestic signing and ratification procedures, with the goal of formally signing the CAFTA 3.0 upgrade protocol before the end of this year, according to MOFCOM.

Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

With the United States

56.3 bln yuan

With Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

56.74 bln yuan

With Singapore

46.49 bln yuan

Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

of foreign-funded enterprises

146.56 bln yuan

Up 8.9%

By the end of April

220,000

new employees had joined China's service outsourcing industry

(Source: *Ministry of Commerce*)

XINHUA

MALAYSIA

The opening ceremony of the plenary session of the 46th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Kuala Lumpur on May 26, with greater regional integration and resilience against trade and economic disruptions high on the agenda

ISRAEL

Protestors call on the government to reach a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and come to an agreement with the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in Tel Aviv on May 28

XINHUA

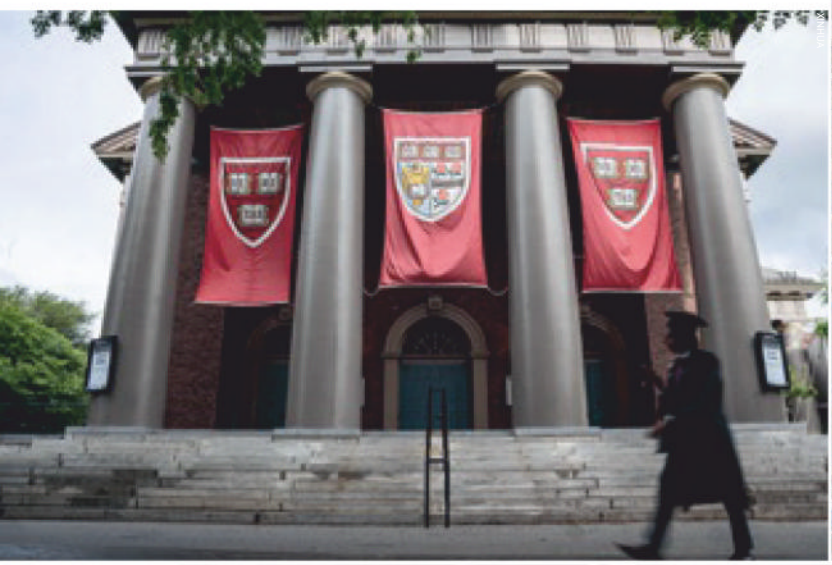
XINHUA

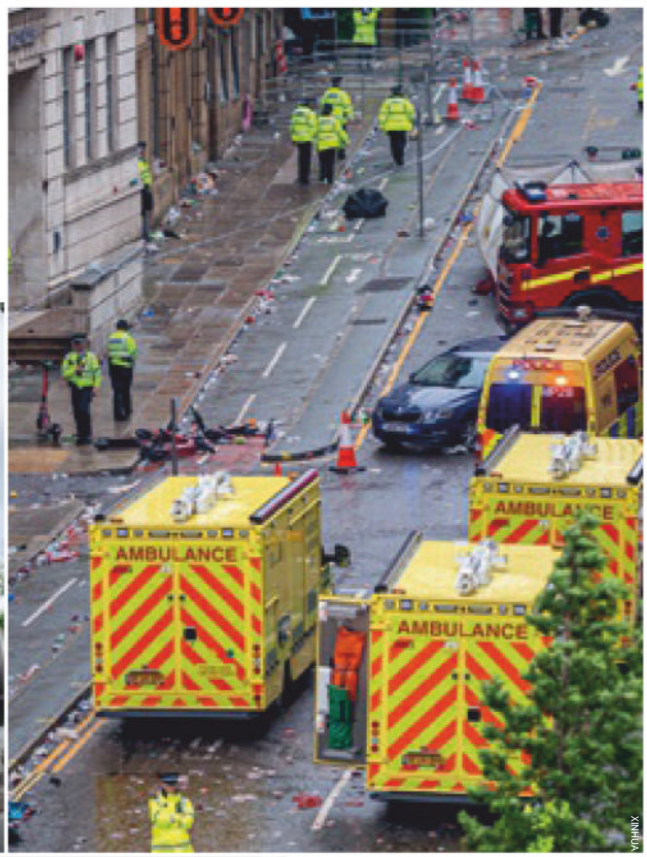
CAMBODIA

Part of the China-Cambodia "Golden Dragon-2025" joint exercise, a live-force land-air drill is underway in Kampong Chhnang Province on May 28

UNITED STATES

The Harvard University campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 24. A U.S. federal judge issued an injunction blocking the Donald Trump administration from revoking the legal status of foreign students studying and working in the country on May 22





UNITED KINGDOM

Aerial footage of an incident in which a car ploughed into a crowd celebrating Liverpool Football Club's Premier League victory in Liverpool on May 26. Twenty-seven people were taken to hospital and two suffered serious injuries, including one child

FRANCE

Passengers wait inside Cannes Train Station after a power outage struck southeast France on May 24

DIRECTOR WINS SPECIAL AWARD AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

On May 24, director **Bi Gan** won the Special Award at the 78th Cannes Film Festival Cannes for his epic fiction feature *Resurrection*, known in Chinese as *Kuang Ye Shi Dai*. It was the first time in a decade that a Chinese-language film has been honored in the festival's top-tier main competition.

Resurrection, Bi's third directorial feature, consists of six chapters and is set in a post-apocalyptic future where humanity has lost the ability to dream.

A self-taught filmmaker born in Guizhou Province in 1989, Bi's previous credits include *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (2018), which had its world premiere at the Un Certain Regard section of the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, and *Kaili Blues* (2015), which won him the best new film director award at the 52nd Golden Horse Awards.

Flexible Fridays

Gmw.cn

May 27

In a move that has stirred debate across Chinese social media, the city of Mianyang in Sichuan Province has unveiled a pilot program promoting a 4.5-day flexible workweek. While its adoption is left entirely to the discretion of employers, the initiative encourages regions to consider granting employees Friday afternoons off.

Mianyang is not alone in the national push for work-life balance reforms. Since 2015, the year the State Council, the country's highest state administrative organ, issued a directive calling for more flexible working hours, several provinces, including Zhejiang and Guangdong, have experimented with similar schemes.

Local authorities are hoping that the extra half-day off will allow for more weekend getaways and expand the radius of micro-vacations, while sparing travelers the congestion and inflated costs typically associated with national holidays.

Despite its potential benefits, the nationwide adoption of the 2.5-day weekend remains a distant prospect. Bridging that gap will require both technological and policy support: Businesses could leverage AI and other digital tools to relieve employees of routine tasks, while the government might consider offering incentives or safeguards to firms willing to pilot the new schedule.

Tech Meets Tradition

Oriental Outlook

May 15

In one of the most talked-about performances at this year's Spring Festival Gala, a major annual variety show broadcast on Chinese New Year's Eve, 16 humanoid robots, dressed in flamboyant peony-prints, joined human dancers for a synchronized *Yangko* routine, a traditional folk dance popular in China's northeastern provinces. The routine became an instant online sensation, sparking a widespread discussion about how technology is reshaping the way traditional culture is seen,

"When we talk about infrastructure for integration, we should think beyond trade. It's also about labor mobility, about enabling Latin American citizens to enjoy greater independence and opportunity within the region."

Lina Luna, a Sinologist and professor at the School of International Relations at the Externado University of Colombia, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, saying Colombia's formal accession to the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative is a historic step for the country

"When women lead, they protect not only themselves but their families and their communities and their countries. When they participate in politics, in security forces, in peace processes, the impact is transformative."

Sima Bahous, UN Women Executive Director, on May 22, as she called for recognizing reproductive violence as a distinct category of harm

experienced and engaged with.

Across China, similar efforts are bringing new life to heritage sites and cultural institutions. In Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, for instance, visitors to the Huaqing Palace are treated to a digital rendering of the love story between Emperor Xuanzong (reign 712-756) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and his consort Yang Yuhuan. Spectacular landscapes such as misty forests and a fire-lit lake are brought to life using holographic projection, underwater stages and naked-eye 3D displays.

A similar blend of innovation and tradition is making waves in the digital entertainment sector. Major advances in visual effects have catapulted both *Black Myth: Wukong*, an action-adventure video game that draws inspiration from the classic Chinese literary work *Journey to the West*, and *Nezha 2*, the second animated film in the Nezha franchise, to the top of download charts and the global box office, respectively.

There is growing optimism that, with the backing of supportive policy measures, China's cultural landscape will continue its digital transformation—providing fresh models for preserving tradition in a modern context, and new avenues for global audiences to connect with Chinese heritage.

Robots in the Ring

Guangzhou Daily
May 27

On the evening of May 25, the world's first-ever humanoid robot boxing tournament, the China Media Group World Robot Competition, kicked off in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. After several intense rounds reminiscent of the sci-fi blockbuster *Real Steel*, the championship title ultimately went to AI Strategist, a robot controlled by operator Lu Xin.

Training robots with real-world data can be extremely complex and expensive. But robot combat offers a highly efficient way for tech companies to collect data and improve how fast a machine can learn. The competition on May 25 not only demonstrated how far humanoid robots have come, with notable breakthroughs in motion control, perception systems and real-time operation, but also China's rising profile in the global robotics scene.

Beyond the spectacle, the event also gave companies a chance to test their robots, identify weaknesses and push for further technological upgrades.

For now, these robot fights still rely on human operators behind the scenes. But as robots learn to walk, jump, dance and now fight, they are quickly pushing the frontiers of digital intelligence.

WINNER OF THE WORLD WOMEN'S SNOOKER CHAMPIONSHIP

Bai Yulu defeated Thai snooker player Mink Nutcharut 6-4 in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, to take her second consecutive World Women's Snooker Championship title on May 27.

At the 2024 World Women's Snooker Championship, Bai became the first player from the Chinese mainland to win the women's world title. At the 2024 UK Championship, Bai became the first female player to win three matches at a professional ranking event.

Bai, born in 2003, began professional training at the age of 9. In 2017, she reached the finals of the China Snooker Youth Series, winning the championship in the junior category. A year later, she took the runner-up position at the World Under-21 Snooker Championship.

"As economic integration deepens through initiatives like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Asia's role in shaping 21st-century governance, sustainability and multilateralism will continue to expand."

Maya Majueran, director of independent and pioneering organization Belt & Road Initiative Sri Lanka, in an article published by Xinhua on May 26

"We aim not only to let bionic vision systems 'see' the world but also 'see clearly' and 'understand' it."

Zhang Dawei, a professor of optical engineering at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and leader of a research team that recently made a major breakthrough in the field of bionic vision, inspired by the compound eyes of insects, laying a new path for microscopic observation and high-end instrument development

Students watch a robot soccer game at a primary school in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on May 26

COVER STORY

PLAYING THE LONG GAME

The strategic blueprint behind China's development—one five-year plan at a time

By Lu Yan

In July 1956, the First Automobile Works in Changchun, Jilin Province—part of the country's traditional northeastern industrial base—produced the first car made in the People's Republic of China (PRC). This achievement was a glimpse into the 156 key projects outlined in the country's First Five-Year Plan (1953-57). Fast forward to 2024, and thanks to high levels of automation and intelligent manufacturing, major Chinese automaker BYD's factory in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, is able to roll out a new electric vehicle every minute, highlighting the advancements in high-end manufacturing as detailed in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

The five-year plan, also known as the Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, is a key guiding document for China's medium- to long-term economic and social progress. It outlines the country's overall goals, main tasks and policy orientation across different sectors over a five-year period.

"China's five-year planning system is an important tool for national governance. It is one of the few medium- to long-term planning systems in the world that has been retained and successfully implemented, showcasing the unique advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics," Yan Yilong, Deputy Dean of the Institute for Contemporary China Studies at Beijing-based Tsinghua University, told *Beijing Review*.

Hailing the five-year plans as "strategic and flexible," British scholar and political commentator Martin Jacques told Xinhua News Agency, "The five-year plans are suited to the Chinese mentality and the Chinese idea of thinking long-term."

This year is the final year for the implementation of the 14th Five-Year Plan. The 2025 Government Work Report, released in early March, underscores the importance of fully completing the plan's objectives, so as to lay a solid foundation for a strong start to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30).

The evolution

Since the launch of the First Five-Year Plan, these plans have not only guided China's transformative development but also evolved to meet the conditions and challenges of each era.

For example, the First Five-Year Plan was introduced in the early years following the founding of the PRC in 1949, when the economy was weak and the industrial base was almost nonexistent. As a result, the plan focused heavily on industrialization and the development of heavy industry in particular.

In contrast, with the country's fast▶▶

development, the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981-85) included social development goals, reflecting the broader reforms being implemented across various sectors, including science and technology, education, culture and healthcare. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) aimed for moderate prosperity, while the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) emphasized achieving a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

One major characteristic of the five-year plans is the incorporation of quantitative targets. The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-90) was the first to set a specific target for GDP growth, a gauge of a country's economic health. Meanwhile, the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10) set an ambitious goal for energy efficiency, aiming for a 20-percent reduction in the energy intensity of the country's GDP. Since 2006, the plan has adopted a system comprising both obligatory targets and anticipatory targets, covering both the government's responsibilities and society's participation.

The 14th Five-Year Plan, launched after China achieved the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, focused on high-quality development. It did not set an explicit GDP growth target but instead prioritized green transition, technological self-reliance, common prosperity, balanced regional development, as well as deeper reform and high-standard opening up.

Today, the five-year plan covers a broad range of fields including economy, society, technology, ecology and culture. "It reflects a holistic approach to development," Yan said.

The compilation

The formulation process of a five-year plan follows a structured framework that combines the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee with broad public participation. A plenary session of the CPC Central Committee puts forward its proposals for the formulation of the plan. The State Council, the highest state administrative organ, then drafts an outline for the plan, which is later reviewed and approved by the National People's Congress, China's national legislature, before being officially published—and subsequently implemented.

Throughout the entire process, public input and expert opinions are carefully considered. These arrangements gather insights and experiences from different sectors, reflect public expectations and build consensus.

Yan stated that the decision-making process includes multiple rounds of discussions, research and feedback, with the goal of gathering diverse opinions and maximizing quality input from all parties involved.

This process typically spans several years. For instance, the drafting of the current 14th Five-Year Plan, adopted in 2021, began as early as 2018.

The outcomes

Tangible results have been achieved under the plans' guidance. The First Five-Year Plan, for instance, laid China's industrial foundation via concentrated efforts to build the country's first steel production base and first auto manufacturer. The 13th Five-Year Plan period saw the establishment of the world's largest high-speed rail network in China, which has revolutionized domestic travel by greatly reducing travel time.

"From a historical perspective, the five-year plans serve as a step-by-step arrangement to ensure policy continuity and alignment with long-term strategic objectives," Yan explained.

Moreover, not just planning is emphasized, but also implementation and evaluation. "Research indicates a high accomplishment rate for the goals set in these plans, demonstrating that strategic visions have been turned into real outcomes," Yan added.

Under the 14th Five-Year Plan, China remains the world's largest economic growth engine, contributing approximately 30 percent to the world economic growth.

Between 2021 and 2024, China's annual GDP growth rates were 8.6 percent, 3.1 percent, 5.4 percent and 5 percent, respectively. Although the growth rate has slowed down compared to previous years, it still outpaces that of other major economies.

China has also established a complete industrial system, encompassing 41 major industrial categories, 207 subcategories and 666 detailed categories, according to the National Development and Reform Commission. This is the world's most complete manufacturing ecosystem, capable of producing virtually every industrial product category, and its industrial chain is rapidly upgrading to higher-end sectors.

The country has made strides in technological innovation, achieving breakthroughs in fundamental research and core technologies across numerous fields, including life sciences, materials science and computer science.

In 2024, total research and development funding in China exceeded 3.6 trillion yuan ($500 billion), with the ratio of investment in research and development to the country's total economic output steadily increasing to 2.68 percent, surpassing the average level of European Union countries.

Moreover, the country has greatly improved its social welfare support, focusing on stabilizing employment and increasing income. Approximately 50 million new urban jobs have been created during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, with resident income keeping pace with economic growth. Public services and social security have been progressively strengthened through concrete measures: annual pension increases, more seamless cross-province medical care settlements and expanded community service offerings. In parallel, environment quality has also substantially improved nationwide. Food and energy security levels have reached historic highs, with steady improvements in the resilience and safety of related industrial and supply chains, along with stronger financial sector safeguards.

China's transportation infrastructure continues to break records, with operational high-speed rails now spanning 48,000 km, accounting for 70 percent of the global total; while highway networks extend across 190,000 km, maintaining the world's top position. Additionally, total computing power has doubled and data production

XINHUA

Chinese automaker BYD's driving assistance system on display at an exhibition in Shanghai on April 25

has surged exponentially, now equivalent to the combined data resources of over 15 million national libraries.

Also during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, China's global stature has greatly risen. The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by China in 2013 to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, has expanded to include agreements with over 150 countries and more than 30 international organizations, fueling industrial and investment cooperation worldwide. The China-proposed Global Development Initiative, which supports global sustainable development by addressing pressing global challenges—particularly in developing countries, Global Security Initiative, which promotes durable peace worldwide, and Global Civilizations Initiative, which calls for promoting human progress with inclusiveness and mutual learning, have all gained widespread international recognition, demonstrating the country's role as a responsible major power.

Concurrently, China has deepened high-level opening-up policies, completely removing restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector, and reducing the negative list for foreign investment, which prohibits or restricts certain industries for foreign investment purposes, to a record-low 29 items.

The future

China's 15th Five-Year Plan will begin in 2026. "The planning must focus on the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization, with a view to building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation," Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, said at a symposium on China's economic and social development in the 15th Five-Year Plan period in Shanghai on April 30.

In planning economic and social development for the next five years, targets and tasks should be set in a reasonable manner with approaches and measures to be proposed for each specific field, Xi added.

"We must unswervingly manage our own affairs well, and stay committed to expanding high-standard opening up," Xi told the symposium, stressing promoting high-quality development on all fronts.

"Greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring both development and security, with a comprehensive assessment of domestic and external risks and challenges," he said, calling for efforts to improve the national security system.

Yan emphasized that the primary challenge during the 15th Five-Year Plan period will be to maintain medium- to high-speed growth, with insufficient effective demand posing a particularly acute risk.

To tackle this, key strategies include: developing new quality productive forces to stimulate consumption through fresh demand generation, and prioritizing employment stability to ensure the income foundation for household financial security.

First introduced in 2023, new quality productive forces refer to advanced productivity freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths. It features cutting-edge technologies, high efficiency and high quality, and comes in line with China's new development philosophy.

Yan added that major steps should be taken in pursuing common prosperity, improving income distribution, boosting purchasing power for middle- and low-income groups and investing in public welfare. These measures can simultaneously stimulate domestic demand while addressing social concerns.

Equally essential is mastering expectation management—or the aligning of public and business perceptions with policy objectives. As Yan stressed, "The power of public confidence cannot be underestimated." By creating a positive outlook, this psychological dimension of economic governance can produce self-reinforcing cycles of stability and growth.

Moreover, to preserve investor confidence, financial system stability demands urgent attention to balance sheet repairs, particularly in real estate and stock markets.

"China's successive five-year plans provide the global economy with unparalleled certainty—a critical anchor at a time when the world faces profound unpredictability," Wang Huiyao, President of the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, told Xinhua. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to luyan@cicgamericas.com

Truce Over Tariffs

YIN KANG

Gao Zhikai (Victor Gao), Vice President of the Center for China and Globalization and former interpreter for Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, talks with Danny Haiphong, an independent journalist and researcher in the U.S., in Beijing on May 22

During a recent seminar hosted by *Beijing Review*, key opinion leaders and influencers from China and the U.S., **Gao Zhikai** (Victor Gao), Vice President of the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization and former interpreter for Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, and **Danny Haiphong**, an independent journalist and researcher on geopolitics in the U.S., discussed the current progress between China and the U.S. on tariffs, and the shifts in today's world, as well as China's role in the international community. Edited excerpts of their conversation follow:

Danny Haiphong: The U.S. and China have been locked in a cycle of tariffs for quite some time. Recently, however, during talks in Switzerland, the two nations reached what Western media has referred to as a "truce"—or at least a pause—in the imposition of the steep U.S. tariffs on China, which had threatened to exceed 145 percent.

Yet, despite this de-escalation on tariffs, the U.S. Commerce Department on May 12 issued new restrictions targeting Huawei's advanced Ascend chips. According to a Reuters report, the guidance states that the use of these chips will be restricted "anywhere in the world," and any company utilizing them could be in violation of U.S. export controls.

Could you discuss this latest development, which seems like an economic escalation, perhaps part of the broader U.S. strategy to contain China? Even as the U.S. appears to have stepped back from aggressive tariffs, this move suggests a continued economic offensive, including what the former U.S. President Joe Biden's administration termed the "chip war." What are your thoughts on this, and how do you see it fitting into the larger "trade war" dynamic?

Gao Zhikai: If we look at the world of today, the greatest predictability is the unpredictability of the Donald Trump administration. The greatest certainty is the uncertainty of the Trump administration. Now, whether this is a good thing or a bad thing depends on your perspective. For me, it's a disaster. Because I think the U.S., the strongest military power in the world, the largest economy—if we use official exchange rate as the benchmark—a country with so many military bases in more than 100 countries in the world, is becoming such a source of unreliability, unpredictability and uncertainty. This will really shake up the world because lots of the businesses do not know where and how they want to make their medium-term and long-term investment.

And the second point is that this global "reciprocal tariff" war is the wrong one for the U.S. to fight. It's not constructive. It's not going to help the declared goal of moving manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.

So if we really sift through all these confusing things, I think, probably, Trump and his team started with some misleading presumptions. One is that by imposing maximum tariffs on China, China will crumble. Another indulgence of Washington may be, "I can use tariffs to block or to embargo some if not all the Chinese exports to the U.S. while U.S. exports to China will have a free walk in the China market." That's fantasy. If you want to block all the Chinese exports to the U.S., there will be no more export of U.S. products to the China market—the largest market in the world today that will become more and more important in the coming years and coming decades.

Washington has been coercing Walmart into eating up all the tariffs, rather than

passing them on to the consumers. That's not market practice. If a government introduces tariffs, traders like Walmart need to pass on the costs to the end users. Eventually all the American people need to pay the tariffs. And it will cause inflation. I think it will make life for people in the middle-class or lower income bracket even more difficult.

From the Chinese perspective, this trade war will cause a lot of difficulty and hardships for Chinese exporters. But we will stabilize the situation as we analyze more than just economic losses and gains. China really views this in a very philosophical way. This time, the U.S. is trying to destroy free trade. China wants to protect free trade, so we need to stand firm in protecting it. China does this not just for its own benefit, but for all countries' benefit as well as for the fundamental interest of the American people.

Washington should really come back to its senses. A tariff war does not solve the problem, nor does a technological war. And competition on fair terms should be encouraged, because that means mankind is still moving forward while making progress. No one has a monopoly on technological innovation. No one can monopolize the creativity of humankind.

So the story is very simple—work with China on equal terms. Don't deny China's access. Because if you try to choke China, you end up with a much more formidable competitor.

Haiphong: There's growing attention to this reality—or acknowledgment of it—even within mainstream Western media circles. *The New York Times* discusses how China could make the U.S. irrelevant and be the new dominant power. *The Economist* highlights how China has now become "cool." Western influencers and major figures are streaming here, showcasing China to their audiences. Meanwhile, the *South China Morning Post* notes the shifting power dynamics, emphasizing that the U.S. must now engage with China on a fully equal footing.

This shift is striking because, not long ago, and even today, to some extent, U.S. foreign policy circles and mainstream media often portrayed China in a dismissive or even derogatory light. Yet increasingly, there's recognition of a new reality: The relationship between the two has changed dramatically. What has driven this shift? How do you see it unfolding in the broader context?

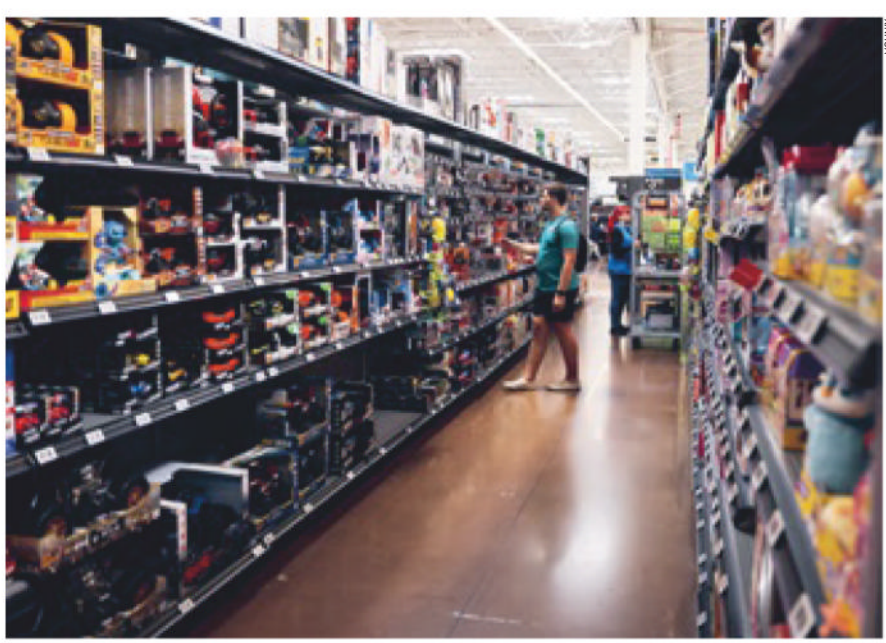
Gao: First of all, I would say the international order we live in now was established in 1945 after defeating Nazi Germany in Europe and Japanese fascism in the Asia-Pacific. It's structured around the United Nations (UN). And the international order established in 1945 was never meant to be a unipolar world. It was always supposed to be a multipolar world. And that's the reason why there are five permanent member states of the UN Security Council, each with a veto power.

Now, since 1945, there have been ups and downs in international relations. But China has always been very much at the head of the table. China was the first country to sign the UN Charter. No one in the world should try to dismiss how much China has been contributing to civilization of mankind as a whole.

Secondly, I think it's time for the U.S. to practice what professor Paul Kennedy of Yale University said, "Don't overreach." This probably is exactly what's happening when the U.S. Government publicly announces their policy prohibiting all the countries in the world from using Huawei chips. It's a typical example of overreach, which will exhaust the U.S. and hollow out its overall strength.

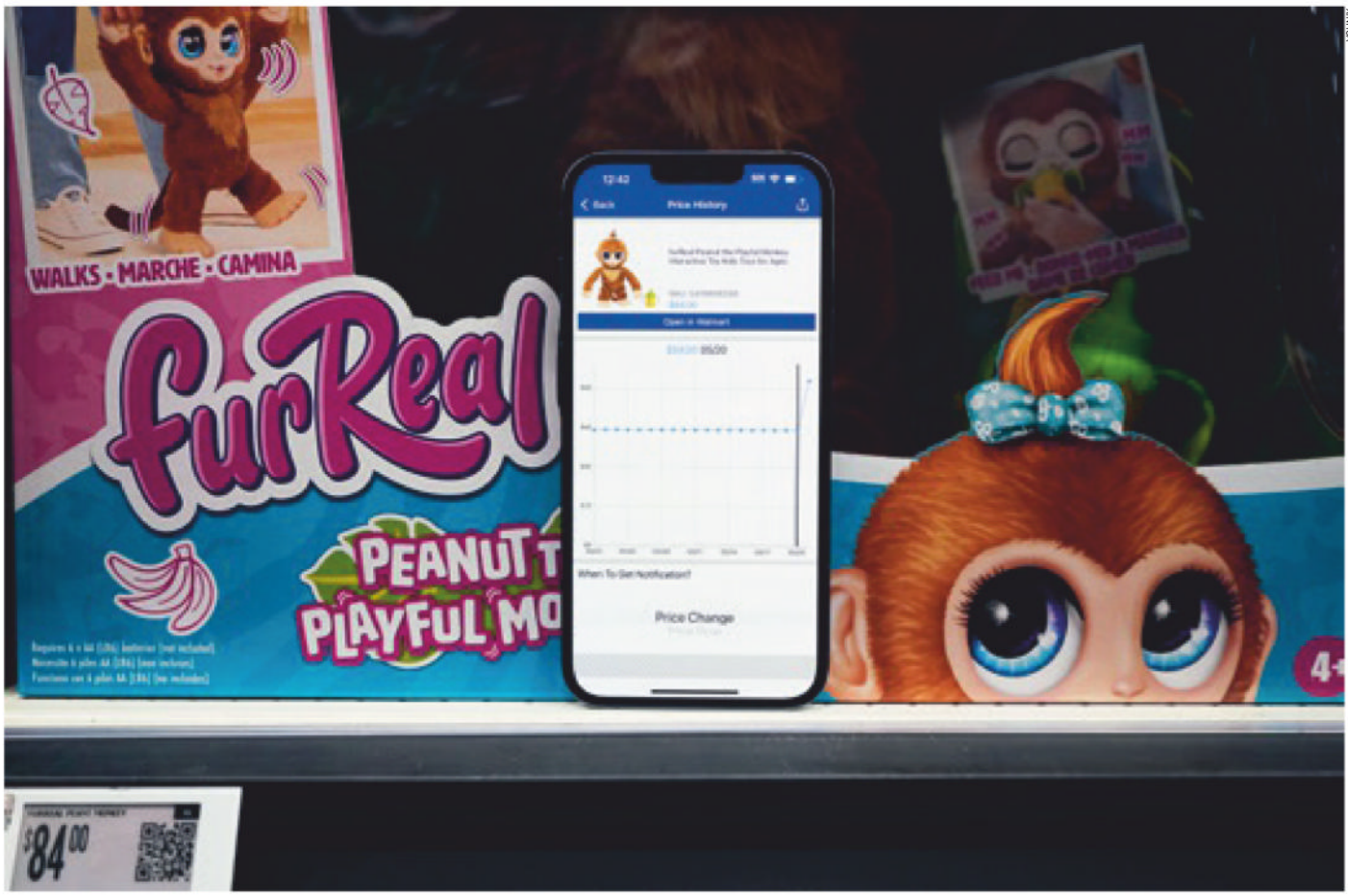
China does not want to see the decline of the U.S. and China's peaceful rise is not premised on the decline or the demise of the U.S. I believe the two countries can coexist very well. Chinese President Xi Jinping has said and continues to assert the world is big enough to accommodate both countries, and one country's success is an opportunity for the other.

I believe the world will be better served if China and the U.S. view and deal with each other as equals. I even coined a term: MerryChina, where China and America combined together will become a MerryChina. And I hope that will make the world a merrier world. ▶▶



XINHUA

An aisle of a Walmart store in Rosemead, California, the U.S., on May 15



A price-tracking mobile app interface displays the price change of a Chinese-made monkey toy at a Walmart store in San Leandro, California, the U.S., on May 21

Haiphong: The West, with the U.S. at its head, continues to talk about China and its own "sphere of influence," which mainly centers in the Asia-Pacific, but includes the entire Global South and global majority. Whenever China is talked about in the Western media, it's usually with China seeking a sphere of influence. What's your assessment of this?

Gao: China is a country really focusing on the world as a total sphere of influence. By promoting free trade, it now is the largest trading partner of about 140 countries and regions in the world. And for the remaining 60 some countries, China probably is the second largest trading partner.

All countries in the world are equally important. China views each country, big or small, as a country that China needs to engage with on equal terms.

China has helped Indonesia to build the high speed railway from Bandung to Jakarta. It is helping Malaysia to build the East Coast Rail Link. China has helped Peru build the very sophisticated Chancay Port. It is working with Brazil to build highways and railways, connecting the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast, linking it with Shanghai Port.

There are numerous such examples. Why? Because when China initiated its reform and opening-up policy in 1978, it adopted two principles. The first principle is that building a road will make more money for all involved stakeholders. We want to build roads so that efficiency and connectivity will be promoted. Secondly, a country cannot really achieve real wealth without developing its industry. So China always wants to build factories to produce something rather than spending the bulk of the time on financial engineering. Financial development is important, but it can never replace industrial production. So we want to build connectivity. We want to maximize productivity and efficiency. We want to make sure that China produces and invents.

China is promoting free trade and it is working very hard to produce for the benefit of all the consumers in the world. That means the world is a totality for China, which should not be divided up into spheres of influence. Using a pragmatic perspective to look at China, people will come to the conclusion that the country is a force for good. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to dingying@cicgamericas.com

BRIDGING THE PACIFIC

Pacific Dialogue
对话太平洋

Follow us on X @Pacific_Dialog
& on Douyin @对话太平洋

Healing a Fractured International System

By Lan Xinzhen

The International Organization for Mediation (IOMed), the world's first intergovernmental legal organization dedicated to the settlement of international disputes through mediation, was established in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on May 30. First proposed in 2022 by China along with 19 other countries, the organization has drawn broad initial support and participation, with representatives of nearly 60 countries from across Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, along with about 20 international organizations, including the United Nations, attending the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation.

According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the IOMed is a key mechanism designed to promote the peaceful resolution of international disputes through mediation, as enshrined in the UN Charter. It presents a new option for peacefully settling international disputes and achieving win-win cooperation among nations.

Against the backdrop of unilateralism and protectionism severely undermining the international order, the establishment of the IOMed responds to the shared concerns of the global community regarding peace, stability and development. And it will promote fairer and more equitable global governance.

A new approach needed

Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the UN Security Council has repeatedly been paralyzed by major-power politics, such as the U.S. frequent abuse of its veto power to shield Israel's military actions in Gaza from effective restraint.

Similarly, the International Criminal Court (ICC), tainted by political bias, has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin on charges of war crimes. It also investigated and detained former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, yet is turning a blind eye to documented atrocities by U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Moreover, the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism has been dysfunctional since 2019 due to U.S. obstruction of appellate judge appointments, leaving 30 rulings in limbo without the possibility of appeal. These cases highlight the severe limitations of existing international dispute resolution mechanisms, underscoring the urgent need for a fresh new approach.

The world is undergoing transformation unseen in a century, with economic globalization facing headwinds, protectionism and unilateralism on the rise, and profound shifts in the global economic, technological, cultural, security and political landscapes. As nations grapple with escalating disputes and conflicts, there is a growing demand for more effective mechanisms to uphold peace and stability. Mediation, as a peaceful, flexible and cooperative means of conflict resolution, is gaining increasing recognition and importance, as the demand for peacefully resolving conflicts grows even stronger across the international community.

As developing countries enhance their crisis response and global governance capabilities, and engage more actively in international affairs, the Western-dominated governance system has become increasingly inadequate in meeting the demands of the

XINHUA

A United Nations (UN) Security Council open debate on the topic of "maintenance of international peace and security upholding the UN Charter" at the UN headquarters in New York City, the United States, on January 9, 2020

XINHUA

Ukrainians hold up photos of missing soldiers as released Ukrainian soldiers return to the country by bus on May 23. Ukraine and Russia reached their largest-ever prisoner swap deal during a meeting in Istanbul, Türkiye, on May 16

times. The global governance framework urgently needs innovation at the institutional level.

The establishment of the IOMed is a timely response to these challenges. It provides developing nations with a new platform to participate in shaping international rules, helping steer global governance toward greater fairness, rationality and effectiveness.

Can it help?

The wide participation of countries and international organizations in the IOMed is a sign of their endorsement of this new diplomatic and cooperative framework. As an alternative to traditional judicial and arbitration mechanisms, the IOMed challenges the U.S.-centric global order by emphasizing dialogue and mediation over unilateral sanctions or military coercion—a stark contrast to Washington's confrontational tactics. It helps lessen international tensions and provides opportunities to repair strained relationships within the global order.

In resolving disputes, the organization will adhere to international law and relevant global regulations, upholding objectivity and neutrality while maintaining fairness, justice and transparency. This will avoid issues such as power politics and double standards often seen in U.S.-led interventions, thereby fostering trust and recognition across the international community. By attracting broader participation, it shall contribute to reshaping the global system.

The very creation of the IOMed—a product of multilateral cooperation—demonstrates a global consensus on peaceful dispute resolution and reform of the current system. By fostering further dialogue and pooling collective strength, it will offer a new pathway to address global challenges and advance a more just and equitable international order.

Considering all these factors, the new organization has the potential to partially restore the international order disrupted by the U.S.

Despite its promise, the IOMed will still face major challenges. As the U.S. remains a pivotal force in the current system, it has refrained from participating in the organization's establishment or signing relevant agreements. And its considerable influence in international economic, political and military domains may weaken the IOMed's effectiveness in its future operations.

China: a staunch defender

Since 2022, China has spearheaded the organization's establishment, transforming the initiative from concept to reality. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China is a staunch defender of the international order based on the principles and objectives of the UN Charter—and the establishment of the IOMed aligns with China's commitment to implementing the charter's provisions.

China is also a firm supporter of the multilateral trading system. Since joining the WTO in 2001, the country has adhered to its rules, promoting the healthy development of the multilateral trading framework. Through fulfilling WTO obligations, expanding its market access, and fostering global trade growth, China has injected robust momentum into global economy. Pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace, China advocates resolving international disputes through dialogue and negotiation, opposing the use or threat of force. In global affairs, it consistently strives to mediate and facilitate political solutions to pressing issues.

China's vision of global governance, which was proposed in 2017, featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit, has garnered increasing recognition and support from nations, offering fresh perspectives and solutions to global challenges.

In the future, the IOMed will drive the diversification of international dispute resolution mechanisms, further refine and enforce international law, and provide stronger legal support for maintaining the stability of the global order. It will also empower developing countries with greater influence and voice in international affairs, challenging the longstanding dominance of Western nations in dispute resolution and fostering the democratization of international relations. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to dingying@cicgamericas.com

A New Vision for Fission

In an interview with *Beijing Review* reporters, **Artem Goncharuk**, Director General of the Rosatom East Asia Company in Beijing, shared his views on the critical role of nuclear power in facilitating sustainable development, the deepening cooperation between China and Russia in the field and the future of atomic energy in a rapidly decarbonizing world. Edited excerpts of their conversation follow:

***Beijing Review*: Given the continuous growth in global energy demand, what role does atomic energy play in accelerating decarbonization, increasing people's access to affordable and reliable energy and meeting other sustainability goals?**

Artem Goncharuk: Nuclear power plays a crucial role in the transition to a low-carbon future. Unlike fossil fuels, nuclear reactors do not produce direct carbon dioxide emissions during operation. Moreover, over their entire life cycle—including equipment manufacturing, plant construction and decommissioning—emissions per kilowatt hour of electricity remain minimal. This places nuclear power on par with renewable sources such as wind, solar and hydropower in terms of sustainability. As a result, nuclear energy is an essential component of any truly sustainable energy system.

Furthermore, nuclear energy is stable, predictable and cost-efficient—factors that matter greatly to everyday citizens. These benefits are particularly pronounced in remote and sparsely populated areas, where traditional energy infrastructure struggles to meet demand.

To address this challenge, Russia has pioneered innovative solutions such as floating nuclear power plants, which are solar panels mounted on floating structures, and small modular reactors, effectively closing the energy gap in hard-to-reach regions. Unlike traditional sources that require regular fuel supplies, these nuclear facilities can operate autonomously for long periods of time, making them an ideal solution for supplying energy to remote and isolated communities. This emphasizes the key role of nuclear power in creating a sustainable and independent energy infrastructure.

The particular importance of nuclear energy for long-term sustainability lies precisely in the synergy of two technologies: thermal neutron reactors with pressurized water used both as coolant and moderator, and fast reactors. Russia and China are actively developing complementary areas—fast reactors and the classical nuclear fuel cycle. This two-component system makes it possible to reprocess spent fuel, reduce radioactive waste and maximize resource efficiency.

Classical reactors provide basic generation, while fast reactors close the fuel cycle (by reprocessing spent fuel—*Ed.*), expanding the fuel base. Implementing this integrated model will create a complete closed nuclear cycle system—a key step toward a sustainable future.

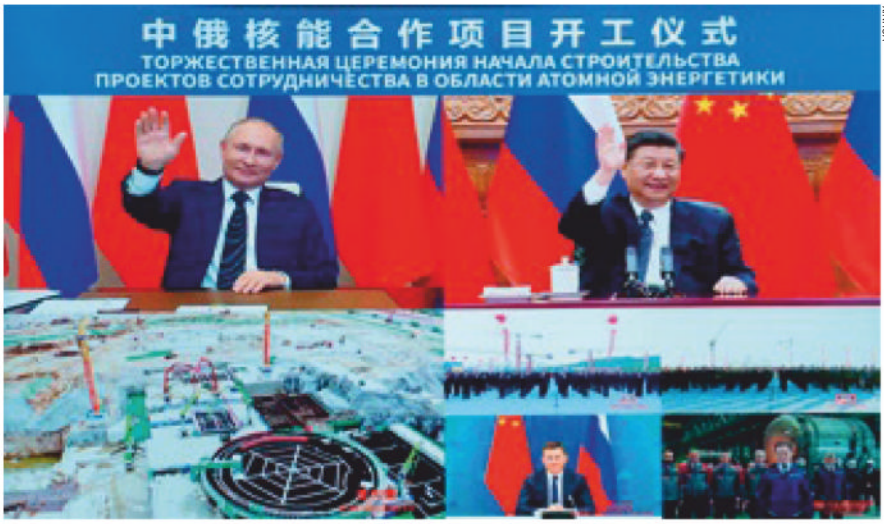
Despite all the advantages you just mentioned, many are still concerned about the safety of nuclear energy. What are some of the safety measures being implemented in Russia's nuclear industry?

Safety is always our top priority when it comes to the deployment of nuclear energy.

Take the VVER-1200 reactor as an example. (VVER-1200 is the up-to-date model of a water-cooled, water-moderated power reactor developed by Russia—*Ed.*) The model features a balanced combination of active and passive safety systems. The former can be manually controlled, whereas the latter are driven by natural forces such as gravity and differential pressure and therefore do not require any human intervention. This dual

XINHUA

Construction of Unit 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant, a China-Russia cooperation project, underway in Huludao, Liaoning Province, on June 18, 2024



XINHUA

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin join the commencement ceremony for the Tianwan and Xudapu nuclear power plants, both China-Russia cooperation projects, via video link on May 19, 2021

approach ensures that the reactor remains safe under all circumstances, even in the event of a total power shutdown.

When it comes to selecting a suitable location for a nuclear power plant, extensive assessments are conducted to identify seismic hazards and other environmental risks. The massive amount of data we collect beforehand will also allow us to customize reactor design so that the facility fits its local conditions.

By implementing nuclear power plant construction projects in Russia, we establish an effective reference for replicating our technologies abroad that could fully transform the recipient countries' energy systems to low-carbon energy and cover the energy deficit and dependence on energy imports.

One thing I would also like to emphasize is that our collaboration with other countries extends far beyond standalone nuclear projects: We don't just deliver power plants—we help build an entire nuclear infrastructure, from staff training all the way to the refinement of regulatory frameworks.

This approach ensures that we take full responsibility for the entire production process—and that sense of accountability is one of our core values.

Speaking of cooperation, how would you describe the current state of nuclear energy collaboration between China and Russia?

There is a Chinese saying that perfectly captures the essence of how China and Russia have cooperated in the nuclear energy sector: "A river runs deep—when it has a source." Our partnership goes back to the 1950s, a time when China's atomic energy sector was still in its infancy. Since then, we have come a long way, and our cooperation in the field has expanded both in scope and depth.

As of now, there are four Russian-designed nuclear reactor units built in China, which are Tianwan Units 1 through 4. (Located on the shore of the Yellow Sea in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant is the largest economic cooperation project between Russia and China—*Ed.*) And construction is underway on four more: Tianwan Units 7 and 8, as well as Units 3 and 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant in Liaoning Province.

The two countries have made important breakthroughs in jointly advancing fast neutron reactor technologies. Chinese companies have been involved for years in experimental work on Russia's BOR-60 fast reactor housed at the Research Institute of Atomic Reactors in Dimitrovgrad. Russian experts, in turn, worked with Chinese specialists to help build the China Experimental Fast Reactor in Beijing and the CFR-600 demonstration reactor in Xiapu County, Fujian Province. Together, these projects reflect the growing strength of our nuclear technology partnership and the tangible progress it continues to deliver.

During President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow in March 2023, the two countries signed a comprehensive agreement to advance cooperation on fast neutron reactors and the closed nuclear fuel cycle. We see this as a foundation for exploring new frontiers in innovation and advancing into new areas where the strategic interests and mutual benefits of both countries converge.

What is the future of atomic energy? Can the world transition entirely to renewable sources in the next 50 years?

There are many new reactors under construction around the world. We are entering a new phase of accelerated growth in nuclear energy, and I'm very confident that nuclear power will play a key role in the global energy mix going forward.

We are also seeing broader applications for nuclear technology. The concept of "nuclear technology" is no longer just about electricity and nuclear power stations. Instead, it has come to encompass nuclear medicine, which uses radiation to assess bodily functions and to diagnose and treat diseases, nuclear-powered icebreakers and the use of radioisotopes in common consumer products.

As public understanding and acceptance continue to grow, I believe nuclear technologies will become more widespread—not just as a clean energy solution, but as a major engine for innovation across sectors. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to pengjiawei@cicgamericas.com

No One Wins

By Liang Xiao

"We're becoming a negative example," Lawrence Summers, former U.S. Treasury Secretary, 27th President of Harvard University and now President Emeritus, said during a May 23 interview, in which he openly criticized the Donald Trump administration's international admissions ban targeting the university.

One day earlier, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced that Harvard University's certification under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program had been revoked. As a result, as of the 2025–26 academic year, Harvard will no longer be permitted to admit new international students, and those currently enrolled must either transfer to another institution or leave the U.S. immediately.

International observers widely interpret these actions as attempts to suppress ideological opponents, reinforce loyalty among Trump's voter base, and simultaneously advance his goal of reducing government spending. Harvard, which chose to openly resist government interference, has since become a prominent target and a cautionary example.

In the current 2024–25 academic year, international students make up 27.2 percent of Harvard's student body, totaling approximately 6,800 individuals. Harvard's graduate schools, in particular, are heavily reliant on international enrollment: 56 percent of students at the Kennedy School are from abroad, as are 36 percent at the Business School. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Public Health also report international student shares exceeding 30 percent. International students can rightly be described as one of the main pillars supporting Harvard; without them—along with visiting scholars—the university's finances, academic research and global standing would all suffer significantly.

The impact of this incident has gone far beyond the U.S. domestic affairs. With more than 1,300 Chinese nationals currently enrolled, Chinese students represent one of the largest international groups at Harvard. On May 23, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning stated at a regular press briefing that China has consistently opposed the politicization of educational cooperation. She emphasized that such actions by the U.S. would only damage its image and international credibility. "Educational cooperation between China and the U.S. is mutually beneficial," Mao said, adding that China will firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese students and scholars abroad.

If international students at Harvard are forced to leave, this will create a lose-lose scenario for all parties involved. The U.S. risks heading further down a path of self-imposed isolation, with the potential for a significant reduction in international student enrollment in the future. According to reports, on May 27, the Trump administration also suspended all new student visa interviews and is considering expanding social media censorship for international students. What is at stake is not merely the $43 billion in annual economic benefits brought by international students, but also—as Summers noted—America's national competitiveness and capacity for technological innovation.

China, however, is by no means a beneficiary of this policy either. According to the latest Blue Book on Employment of Chinese Overseas Returnees released by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange under the Ministry of Education, more than 8 million Chinese students studied abroad between 1978 and 2023, with approximately 82 percent choosing to return to China for employment. As one of the primary destinations for Chinese students, the U.S. has long served as a key partner in educational cooperation, a collaboration that has played a strategically important role in China's reform and opening-up process. Chinese students have not only contributed their intellect to America's progress but also applied the advanced knowledge and experience acquired in the U.S. to China's own development. More importantly, over the past four decades, the student exchange between the two countries has served as a vital bridge for mutual understanding and cooperation, playing an irreplaceable role in fostering stable and constructive bilateral relations.

Education should rise above ideology and serve as a ladder toward the shared progress of humanity. Yet in recent years, the U.S. Government has increasingly politicized academic cooperation. Washington has created a chilling effect—closing the door to Chinese students and placing educational exchange, once a stabilizing pillar of China–U.S. relations, in a precarious position. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to liangxiao@cicgamericas.com

Concrete and Community: Advancing Urban Renewal

By Lan Xinzhen

Across China, local governments are implementing the urban renewal guidelines issued by the general offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, the country's highest state administrative organ, in early May. These policies target the transformation of aging cities through several key pillars including renovating old residential communities, upgrading urban infrastructure, restoring ecological systems, preserving historical heritage and optimizing city functions. The campaign sets 2030 as its benchmark year, by which time Chinese cities are projected to become models of high-quality urban living.

This nationwide renewal effort represents a strategic shift in China's urbanization approach. As of late 2024, the country's permanent population urbanization rate, which measures the ratio of permanent urban residents relative to the total population, had reached 67 percent, with 940 million people permanently settled in urban areas. China's urban development is moving its focus from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement.

The initiative specifically addresses several essential dimensions of urban development: structural optimization through smart planning, cultural continuity through heritage preservation and tangible quality-of-life enhancements for residents. By repurposing existing urban assets rather than pursuing new construction, the campaign embodies China's transition to more sustainable urban development.

As nationwide urban development accelerates, many older residential communities are grappling with mounting challenges, including aging infrastructure, deteriorating housing conditions and inadequate public amenities. Compounding these issues, public service

facilities—such as schools, hospitals, senior care centers and childcare providers—are often scarce or unevenly distributed, creating disparities between older neighborhoods and newer developments.

Urban renewal offers a solution by modernizing infrastructure, optimizing city layouts and strategically redistributing public services. These improvements will address residents' growing expectations for high-quality amenities, elevate living standards and give the people a growing sense of fulfillment and happiness.

Enhancing both the urban environment and living standards will in turn stimulate consumer demand. Residents often seek better home upgrades, higher-quality services and improved leisure options—all of which invigorate the consumer market and inject new vitality into economic growth.

Moreover, urban renewal requires substantial investment and large-scale construction, driving growth in related industries such as building materials and machinery. This expansion not only creates employment opportunities but also provides immediate momentum for broader economic development.

China's urban renewal initiative bases its progress on pilot projects. The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development carried out pilot undertakings in 106 communities nationwide from 2019 to 2024, upgrading corroded municipal pipelines, creating more parking spaces, building facilities for senior care and childcare, as well as installing elevators in existing residential buildings.

The pilot projects revealed that protecting historical and cultural heritage remains a key challenge in urban renewal efforts. Many cities contain valuable historical buildings, neighborhoods and cultural sites that preserve urban memory and tradition. However, some early renewal attempts saw century-old structures demolished or make way for modern high-rises.

The latest guidelines now explicitly mandate cultural preservation, prohibiting further demolition of historical neighborhoods and requiring comprehensive surveys of older communities, blocks and industrial sites to establish strict protection zones.

By continuously optimizing urban functions and enhancing urban living environments, cities can better meet residents' needs. While China has long championed sustainable urban development, as a developing country, challenges of uneven, uncoordinated growth persist. The ongoing urban renewal campaign is an essential pathway for China to achieve more balanced and sustainable urbanization. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to lanxinzhen@cicgamericas.com

***Beijing Review*'s flagship podcast series**

The Governance Podcast

An inside take on the politics of the world's second largest economy

The Governance Podcast delves into topics related to President Xi Jinping's leadership and how the government functions in China. In this series, we explore the past, present and future of governance in China as it works toward meeting its development goals and finds its place in the global community.

Start listening on: YouTube

Center for the Americas,
China International Communications Group
中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）

CICG Center for Americas
中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）

左权

DISCOVER ZUOQUAN

A summer resort in the Taihang Mountains

A revolutionary tradition

A thriving economy

A view of Zuoquan Lake

Navigating a Global Crossroads

Meeting of minds in Beijing provides insights into future trends

By Zhao Wei

As trade tensions sharpen between major economies and geopolitical conflicts reshape the contours of the global order, the 11th China and Globalization Forum convened in Beijing from May 22 to 24 to explore new pathways for global cooperation. The event was co-convened by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), a non-governmental think tank based in Beijing, and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, and was co-organized by the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies (ACCWS) and the China-United States Exchange Foundation.

Roughly 300 experts, economists and policymakers from almost 60 countries attended the forum, including Zhang Jun, former Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations and current Secretary General of the Boao Forum for Asia, a non-governmental and non-profit international organization, and Kang Kyung-wha, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea and President and CEO of the Asia Society in New York City, the U.S.

"The international environment is marked by unprecedented complexity and challenges," Wang Huiyao, founder and President of CCG, said at the forum's opening. He emphasized how recent trade frictions have disrupted global supply chains and injected heightened uncertainty into the international economy.

At the heart of discussions during the forum was the concept of "true multipolarity," not merely a redistribution of geopolitical weight, but what Yu Yunquan, Vice President of China International Communications Group and President of ACCWS, described as a "dialogue between civilizations," promoting mutual understanding over zero-sum rivalry.

Charting new paths

As the world grapples with cascading crises, from regional conflicts to climate emergencies and fractured trade regimes, a pivotal question looms: Can the multilateral architecture that has underpinned international cooperation since the mid-20th century survive the turbulence of the 21st century?

At the forum's opening roundtable, themed Renewing Global Governance and Multilateralism in Uncertain Times, participants explored this dilemma head-on.

There was broad consensus that traditional multilateralism is in a state of existential crisis. Sun Jisheng, Vice President of the Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, noted that dramatic shifts in global power distribution have eroded the operational logic of post-World War II cooperation and that existing international mechanisms have failed to evolve accordingly.

This sentiment was echoed by Rashid Al-Mohannadi, a nonresident fellow at the Middle East Council for Global Affairs in Qatar, who asked pointedly, "What happens when the world's most powerful country no longer believes in the system they helped build?" His observation underscored a deeper malaise: a system increasingly questioned by its own architects.

One of the roundtable's more pointed critiques focused on the U.S.' evolving posture. Konstantinos Tsalakos, head of content at Greece's Delphi Economic Forum, observed a shift from institutional leadership to selective engagement. "The current U.S. administration that uses multilateralism when it serves its interests exits or blocks multilateralism when it does not," he said. This shift, panelists argued, undermines the normative consistency that multilateralism relies upon.

Sun warned that behavior of "unilateralism and power politics" threatens the foundational contractual spirit of international relations and risks encouraging a return to what she called the "law of the jungle," where might makes right and cooperation gives way to coercion.

In light of these challenges, Al-Mohannadi

International experts and policy-makers attend the 11th China and Globalization Forum in Beijing on May 22

advocated for "regional multilateralism," a bottom-up approach where regional institutions like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Gulf Cooperation Council take the lead in solving regional issues. Sun echoed this idea, suggesting that for many African and Asian nations, regional frameworks may prove more adaptable and representative than traditional Western-led structures.

Daniela Schwarzer, member of the executive board of Bertelsmann Stiftung, a German foundation that works on global issues such as education, economy and health, emphasized flexible bilateral trade arrangements as being stepping stones toward greater stability.

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive and chief economist of the European Policy Center, stressed that without adherence to shared rules, the global system risks degenerating into a space dominated by predatory practices.

Despite widespread concern, panelists offered concrete ways forward. Youness Zangiabadi, executive director of the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy in Canada, promoted "case-by-case [efforts] on smaller issues to build trust along the way for more comprehensive and multilateral cooperation." He cited China's role in brokering the 2023 diplomatic rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran as an example.

"The next generation should not make us responsible for having seen the sign of the times, but not acting [on it] forcefully enough," Christian Kastrop, partner and CEO of the Global Solutions Initiative in Germany said, calling for a generational appeal for renewed commitment to fair and inclusive global cooperation and multilateralism.

Reframing the trade narrative

As geopolitical rifts continue to deepen, recent developments in China-U.S. trade relations signal cautious optimism. Trade negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 10-11, produced a joint statement released on May 12, in which both sides committed to substantially reducing bilateral tariff levels. While no new announcements have followed since, many observers, including Kang, interpreted the silence as positive: "No news is good news."

Central to the roundtable deliberations on China-U.S. relations was the urgent need to recalibrate the narratives that form public and policy perceptions of the bilateral relationship. "The narratives of trade wars and the great power competition have become more prominent, but is this narrative truly reflective of reality?" Huang Ping, Vice President of the China-U.S. People's Friendship Association and former Chinese Consul General in New York City and Chicago, said, noting that bilateral trade remains robust, exceeding $660 billion in 2024. The interdependence of both nations, he argued, is structural and enduring.

"Narratives shape perceptions, and perceptions shape policies," Huang continued, underscoring the importance of "finding common ground that meet differences while managing rationality and restraining competition."

His call echoed that of Jing Qian, co-founder and Managing Director of the Center for China Analysis at the Asia Society Policy Institute and co-chair of the roundtable. Qian stressed that an accurate understanding of oneself and others leads to proper actions. He highlighted the importance of nuanced, fact-based perspectives over sensationalist portrayals fueled by media and political agendas.

Trade confrontation, several speakers noted, is merely a symptom of more complex geopolitical and strategic tensions. They urged policy-makers to address the root causes of frictions rather than get lost in surface-level disputes.

Denis Simon, a visiting professor of China business and technology at the Asian Pacific Studies Institute at Duke University, highlighted persistent cooperation in research and higher education—despite surging political strains. "The trust and the understanding in the realms of science and technology and in education that helped stabilize the relationship even during the most difficult moments," he said.

Meanwhile, Fred Teng, President of the America China Public Affairs Institute, emphasized media responsibility in shaping public opinion. "The public absorbs a simplified tale of confrontation, [one] of economic nationalism over economic interdependence," he said, calling on journalists and diplomats alike to advocate for narratives grounded in fact and mutual respect.

The roundtable distilled a fundamental insight: Narratives are not merely reflections of reality—they shape it. As media landscapes grow more polarized in the U.S., fostering accurate, balanced and constructive discourse is essential to sustaining the fragile equilibrium of China-U.S. relations and, by extension, global peace. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to zhaowei@cicgamericas.com

Land-Linked Partners

Trade fair promotes economic and trade collaboration between China and Central and Eastern European countries By Li Xiaoyang

The Fourth China-Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) Expo & International Consumer Goods Fair ran from May 22 to 25 in Ningbo, a coastal city in the eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang. The event brought together 435 enterprises from 14 CEECs and nine other nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, with eight of them being first-time participants. It showcased over 8,000 exhibits, including wine, cheese, skincare products and smart home appliances.

Deals worth over 10 billion yuan ($1.4 billion) were reached between Chinese importers and foreign participants at the event. Streamlined customs procedures introduced specifically for the expo improved efficiency greatly, giving Chinese consumers access to products including Polish beer, Latvian canned fish and Serbian prunes.

Bulgaria's prized saffron and Croatia's premium tuna were granted Chinese market access on May 22, the day the expo opened. According to data released by the General Administration of Customs of China that day, 126 types of agricultural and food products from CEECs have been granted access to the Chinese market.

The expo, with its first three editions taking place in Ningbo in 2019, 2021 and 2023, serves as a platform for CEECs to unlock opportunities in the vibrant Chinese market.

Trade ties

A highlight at this year's event was the debut of an emerging technology zone, where 37 Central and Eastern European companies showcased technologies and products including Serbia's maritime safety sensors, Slovakia's medical equipment and Hungary's virtual reality technology. Chinese humanoid robot companies like Unitree Robotics also exhibited their products.

Han Baohua, President of the Poland-China Chamber of Commerce, told newspaper *Global Times* that the Polish business delegation had signed an agreement for partnership with Chinese companies during the expo. Participating in the event helped the delegation gain a better understanding of the Chinese market and boosted their confidence in engaging with it, Han said.

Jakub Kutyla, a representative of the Polish cosmetics brand AVA Cosmetic Laboratory, said in an interview with Xinhua News Agency at the expo that his company is actively seeking new markets and China stands out for both its openness and stability.

Yan Dong, an official with China's Ministry of Commerce, said at a press conference on the expo that China and CEECs have experienced the stable development of their trade and economic relations since the China-CEEC cooperation mechanism came into being in 2012. China's trade with CEECs has grown at an average annual rate of 8.8 percent since 2012. In 2024, the two-way trade reached a record high of $142.3 billion, up 6.3 percent year on year.

Bulgaria produces 70 percent of the world's total supply of rose oil. For decades, the largest buyers have been famous French perfume companies, but China has become one of the largest importers of the oil in recent years, as distributors continue to introduce rose oil products to domestic consumers.

Transport links have also been improving between China and CEECs. The southward route of the China-Europe freight train network is accelerating trade ties, with CEECs becoming key destinations.

The construction of the Hungary-Serbia Railway, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is proceeding smoothly. The Belt and Road Initiative aims

The Fourth China-CEEC Expo & International Consumer Goods Fair in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, on May 22

to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. The number of direct air routes between China and CEECs has exceeded 30, Yan said.

Launched in 2023, an air corridor linking Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang, with Budapest, Hungary, has expanded from four to seven flights per week over the past two years—with weekly transport capacity reaching 500 tons. As of April, over 39,000 tons of imports and exports had been transported via the corridor.

Investment cooperation between China and CEECs is becoming increasingly close. China's investment in CEECs has so far exceeded $24 billion, Yan said, noting that Chinese electric vehicle and battery enterprises have stepped up investment in the Central and Eastern European region in recent years.

China's leading battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd. (CATL) invested 7.3 billion euros ($8.2 billion) in building a battery factory in Debrecen, Hungary, in 2022.

The plant, which will begin operation later this year, has hired 400 employees. Its workforce is expected to exceed 2,000 by the end of 2025 and to reach 2,600 at full capacity in 2026.

Sanhua Automotive, a Chinese vehicle part maker, has invested in automotive and home appliance component manufacturing in Poland, generating 150 million euros ($169 million) in sales in 2024 and creating over 700 local jobs.

China has developed bilateral economic and trade joint committee mechanisms with all CEECs, and trade facilitation and investment cooperation working groups with most of them, Yan noted.

According to Yan, the strong economic and trade complementarity between China and CEECs suggests potential for cooperation. China has a complete industrial system and innovative technologies, while CEECs have advantages in traditional industries and strong demand for green and digital transformation. CEECs also have trade advantages in high-end industrial products and agricultural and food products.

XINHUA

Trade in services between the two sides is also robust. As China's middle-income population exceeds 400 million, its outbound tourism has been experiencing a boom and CEECs' rich cultural and natural heritage have a strong appeal for Chinese tourists, Yan said.

Booming exchanges

Chinese State Councilor Shen Yiqin said on May 22 at the expo that China will continue to increase its imports from CEECs and expand bilateral trade.

Shen said China is willing to work with the countries to maintain the stability of global industrial and supply chains and safeguard the international environment to enable open cooperation.

Yang Lihua, a professor at the Institute for Central and Eastern European Economic and Trade Cooperation at Ningbo University, told newspaper *People's Daily* that the growing presence of innovations from CEECs in China helps advance technology application and industrial upgrading.

With the rapid growth of emerging industries worldwide, China and CEECs should improve cooperation in the green economy and digital industries. Traditional industries like steel and chemicals in these countries can draw on China's strengths in solar and energy storage technologies to achieve low-carbon transition, Yang said.

CEECs can also leverage their industrial manufacturing advantages to partner with China on developing industrial Internet-based platforms. Overcoming institutional barriers on technical standards and cross-border data flows is essential for developing a new model for China-CEEC cooperation in the digital economy, she said. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to lixiaoyang@cicgamericas.com

From Kilns to Commerce

Changsha plays a pioneering role in reshaping cross-continental trade and cooperation

By Li Yin

From the 50,000 pieces of Changsha Kiln ceramics recovered from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) shipwreck *Black Stone* to today's weekly cargo flights between China and Africa, Changsha's trade with the African continent has spanned over 1,000 years. This historic cultural city, capital of Hunan Province, is playing an increasingly vital role in China-Africa economic and trade cooperation, with a spirit of innovation and openness.

Over a millennium ago, Changsha Kiln ceramics were already being exported to the African continent via the Maritime Silk Road. In 1982, Changsha forged a sister-city relationship with Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of the Congo, becoming a pioneer in China-Africa city-level diplomacy. Today, as the permanent host of the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE) and the core city of the Pilot Zone for In-Depth China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation, the city continues to deepen its economic ties with Africa.

Innovative approach

Data from the Changsha Customs Authority show that Hunan's trade volume with African nations has exceeded 50 billion yuan ($6.8 billion) for three consecutive years, ranking first among all central and western provincial-level regions in China. In 2024 alone, Hunan's imports from and exports to Africa reached 54.85 billion yuan ($7.5 billion). From 2021 to 2024, bilateral trade maintained an impressive average annual growth rate of 14.3 percent.

In recent years, Changsha's trade with Africa has experienced rapid growth, now covering nearly all African countries and regions. In the first four months of 2025, Changsha accounted for 53.3 percent of Hunan's 16.66-billion-yuan ($2.3-billion) trade with Africa. The city's imports of African agricultural products surged by 32.5 percent year on year in the first two months, totaling 80 million yuan ($11 million).

Behind these promising figures lies Changsha's innovative approach to advancing China-Africa trade ties.

One standout initiative is a pre-assessment system for African foodstuffs exported to China, pioneered by the Changsha Customs Authority and officially filed with the General Administration of Customs of China in March. Serving the needs of national platforms such as the Pilot Zone for In-Depth China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation, the system allows for early risk assessment of African foodstuffs that Chinese companies intend to import but have not yet been granted market access in China. Simplified entry assessment procedures

XINHUA

African fruit for sale at the China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation Promotion Innovation Demonstration Park in Changsha, Hunan Province, on July 1, 2023

XINHUA

African diplomatic envoys in China visit the Fourth Changsha International Construction Equipment Exhibition in Changsha, Hunan Province, on May 16

In the first four months of 2025, Changsha accounted for 53.3 percent of Hunan's 16.66-billion-yuan ($2.3-billion) trade with Africa

will be proposed to the authorities to streamline the approval process. This will greatly enhance efficiency, establishing a fast track for African food exports to China.

The system is tailored to the unique features of African food safety management and includes a comprehensive database featuring food safety standards, pre-assessment technologies and risk archives. This data-driven approach provides strong technical support for market access evaluations. It will improve both the quality and speed of market access evaluations for African foods, further facilitating a smooth import pathway.

The Changsha Customs Authority has pledged to continue supporting enterprises in the China (Hunan) Pilot Free Trade Zone in meeting their import needs and to promote the formation of industrial chains around African non-resource products such as coffee, nuts and meat. Pilot free trade zones in China are designated areas where special economic policies and regulations are tested to promote trade liberalization, investment and economic development.

A welcoming market

In recent years, the Chinese market has continued to open to African nations, welcoming a growing list of African agricultural products. At the 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China signed multiple agreements granting market access to African agricultural goods, including fresh avocados from Zimbabwe, soybeans from Zambia and beef and lamb from Namibia. The FOCAC is a mechanism for collective dialogue and cooperation, jointly established by China and Africa in 2000 to cope with new challenges and facilitate common development.

Changsha is emerging as a vital gateway for premium African agricultural goods. African specialty products, including dried sea cucumbers from Kenya, lamb from Madagascar and dried fish bladders from Ugandan wild bass, have made their debut in China through the city.

In July 2024, Kenyan roses were re-exported from Changsha to Uzbekistan. It was the country's first re-export of African flowers, which further expanded African agricultural commodities' global reach through China. Re-export involves the movement of goods across national borders without the goods being consumed or modified in the country of transit.

Three CAETE editions have been held since its inception in 2019, with participation from 53 African countries, including more than 40,000 attendees and representatives of about 4,600 Chinese and African enterprises. The fourth edition is scheduled for June 12-15 this year. Through various supporting initiatives, such as the African Product Brand project, the expo has helped introduce distinctive agricultural products into the Chinese market.

Li Guoxiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the deepening of agricultural trade between China and Africa not only enriches dining options for Chinese consumers, but also helps African farmers find new markets for their products and creates more employment opportunities across the continent. "It's mutually beneficial," Li said.

At the Fourth CAETE, Changsha's cooperation with Africa is poised to reach new heights. Through its ongoing efforts to remove trade barriers and broaden cooperation, the city is making greater contributions to building a China-Africa community with a shared future. **BR**

This article was first published in *ChinAfrica* magazine
Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to yanwei@cicgamericas.com

Past Perfect

China's museum industry experiences explosive growth By Zhang Yage

As China's first historically verified dynasty, confirmed by ancient oracle bone inscriptions and archaeological discoveries, the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.) played a pivotal role in the formation of early Chinese civilization and statecraft. Its cultural and political legacy shaped the nation's social and cultural trajectory for millennia.

To mark the International Museum Day on May 18, the Beijing Grand Canal Museum unveiled The Exhibition Series on the Origins of Chinese Civilization: This is the Shang, an exhibition featuring 338 meticulously curated artifacts from 28 archaeological and cultural institutions nationwide. Through ritual bronzes, jades and inscribed oracle bones, the exhibition reveals the dynasty's technological mastery, including its advanced bronze-casting techniques, societal innovations and the ideological roots of imperial rule.

"We previously visited the Sanxingdui Museum in Sichuan Province to see its bronze exhibition, but this one includes many artifacts from Henan and Shandong provinces as well," Xu Minhui, a Beijing resident waiting in line to see the new exhibition, told *Beijing Review*. "Comparative displays are enlightening—they give us a more holistic perspective on ancient artifacts and how our nation has evolved."

"This exhibition features artifacts from eight past winners of China's Top 10 Archaeological Discoveries awards, with many items making their Beijing debut. It gathers representative relics from major sites, including the Yinxu ruins in Anyang, Henan Province, Zhaigou in Qingjian, Shaanxi Province, and the Jinsha site in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan," Gao Hongqing, the exhibition's curator, said at the opening ceremony on May 18.

The exhibition unfolds across four immersive thematic sections, revealing the Shang's craftsmanship, daily routines, social structures and spiritual world through an extraordinary collection of oracle bones, ritual bronzes, ceremonial jades and utilitarian pottery.

XINHUA

Artifacts from Shaanxi Province are on display at a museum in California, the United States, on May 22

This landmark display, which will run from May 19 to October 12, grants visitors exceptional access to priceless national treasures—many leaving their home institutions for the first time.

Wider accessibility

International Museum Day, initiated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), is celebrated globally every May 18 to underscore museums' essential societal contributions and promote cultural and educational exchanges.

This year's Chinese celebrations spotlighted three key advancements: enhanced public services, technological innovations and global cultural partnerships across the museum sector.

At Beijing's main 2025 event venue, the National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) reported that China now has 7,046 registered museums—averaging one institution per 200,000 people, while annual visits surged to 1.49 billion in 2024, up from 1.29 billion in 2023.

These metrics demonstrate museums' growing centrality in China's cultural landscape.

"We should encourage museums to continuously evolve based on a people-centered philosophy," an official from the NCHA said at the event. "By fully leveraging existing museum resources, we aim to achieve 100-percent nighttime operation at all provincial-level museums by late 2025, and expand educational programs for schools. We will further prioritize accessibility services for seniors and disabled visitors. These initiatives are designed to deliver meaningful public benefits."

To deepen community engagement, Gansu Province, for example, has

revitalized its museum network by spotlighting regional cultural pillars: the Silk Road, the Yellow River civilization, the Great Wall history, ethnic traditions, and industrial heritage. This cultural push has yielded impressive results. Over the past year, Gansu's museums hosted more than 400 exhibitions and over 4,000 educational events, drawing a whopping 30 million visitors.

The province has also embraced digital outreach, organizing 20,000 online events, including virtual exhibitions, livestreamed guided tours and digital education programs, to engage national audiences.

Since 2023, initiatives like Night at the Museum and Culture Tour Buses have targeted student engagement during peak seasons. Shuttle buses connect six major venues, including the Gansu Provincial Museum and Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, while artifact lectures, immersive displays and interactive workshops are offered. In its first month alone, the Culture Tour Buses project brought over 4,000 students from remote areas into direct contact with their heritage.

Also in 2023, the Shaanxi History Museum rolled out its Mobile Museum program, bringing cultural experiences to 23 remote counties through artifact replica kits and virtual reality (VR) technology. The Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Heritage Administration confirmed these outreach efforts are now being institutionalized as a permanent service model.

China's commitment to inclusive museum access has gained global recognition.

At the 2023 UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult), China's county-level museums were highlighted for their role in promoting cultural inclusiveness and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in bridging urban-rural divides through accessible heritage programs.

Additionally, the ICOM's 2023 guidelines for inclusive museum practices featured Suzhou Museum as a case study for its collaborative initiatives with local communities. The report underscored how such partnerships foster social equity and cultural inclusiveness.

"True, equitable museum public service goes beyond free admission—it requires tailored offerings for specific groups, such as people with disabilities, senior citizens or students," Song Xinchao, President of the Chinese Museums Association, said in a 2024 interview with China Media Group. "Take Suzhou Museum's sign language guide system for the hearing-impaired as an example: It demonstrates how cutting-edge technology can enhance accessibility for disabled visitors."

Innovative initiatives

As museums refine their services to boost public engagement and adopt cutting-edge technologies to enhance the overall visitor experience, many have become must-visit destinations for young travelers, with many posting their creative photos and videos on social media.

At the Luoyang Museum in Henan, a pair of color-painted pottery figurines of two women holding hands from the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) has become a popular spot for best friends to have their snaps taken after one influencer's video featuring the same pose with her best friend went viral on Chinese socials. On Douyin, China's version of TikTok, and popular lifestyle and e-commerce app Rednote, hashtag "taking matching photos with 1,000-year-old besties" had garnered over 100 million views as of May 28. The comment sections feature scholars explaining the clothing, makeup and daily lives of women during the Northern Wei period, while many other commenters share photos of themselves posing with their best friends in front of the artifacts.

Meanwhile, a wave of culture-inspired products—seamlessly blending ancient aesthetics with contemporary design—is now popular with museum visitors. This phenomenon showcases both the public's growing passion for rediscovering Chinese heritage and the successful impact of museums' visitor-focused initiatives.

According to data from Beijing-based market research company Intelligence Research Group, the museum cultural product market has witnessed eight consecutive years of growth since 2016. In 2023, its market size reached 13.42 billion yuan ($1.86 billion), with a compound annual growth rate of approximately 22 percent between 2016 and 2023—signaling a high-growth sector.

Henan Museum's Archaeology Mystery Box, for instance, mixes archaeological elements with blind box culture, engaging younger generations. The series contains over 100 miniature replicas of Henan artifacts, including bronze ware, jade objects and pottery, along with tiny excavation tools like shovels and brushes to simulate real digs. Users must identify the historical period of their findings based on artifact features, turning the process into an interactive archaeology lesson. Launched in 2020, the product sold over 100,000 units within a year, with 15 percent of orders coming from overseas.

"Beyond traditional artifact displays, enhancing interactivity through technology and promoting public education via social media, cultural and creative products have become another effective way to bring museum artifacts into the public spotlight," Ma Xiaolin, Director of Henan Museum, told *China Daily* newspaper in 2024.

"We incorporate contemporary aesthetics favored by younger generations and collaborate with universities, tech companies and design teams to develop innovative products; and we promote them through Henan Museum's online and offline channels. We plan to further expand our Archaeology Mystery Box series with new content and products," Ma added. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to zhangyage@cicgamericas.com

The Luster of Sustainability

The remarkable journey of Deqing's freshwater pearl industry

By Ji Jing

Deqing, a county in Zhejiang Province, is known as a "land of water" for its intricate network of waterways, canals and lakes. This abundance of water provides a strong foundation for freshwater aquaculture, fostering the production of lustrous pearls. For centuries, the people of Deqing have practiced a unique freshwater pearl composite farming system centered on "fish-mussel co-culture."

In this integrated aquaculture model, fish feed on aquatic plants, mussels absorb nutrients from fish waste and purify water, and pearls are cultivated within the mussels. The system simultaneously enhances water quality, restores ecological balance and generates dual economic value—from both fishery yields and premium pearl production.

This model, officially called the Zhejiang Deqing Freshwater Pearl Mussel Composite Fishery System, or simply the Deqing Pearl System, received global recognition on May 21, as it was added to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) list of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) for 2025. Joining the Deqing Pearl System were two other Chinese systems: an ancient pear orchard system in Gansu Province, northwest China, and a white tea culture system in Fujian Province, southeast China. With these latest additions, China now has 25 GIAHS, the highest number in the world.

Launched by the FAO in 2002, the GIAHS program assists farming communities in safeguarding traditional agricultural systems and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures.

"As China's first GIAHS project in aquaculture, the Deqing Pearl System builds a new bridge for Chinese traditional agricultural wisdom to reach the global stage and has exemplary significance," Min Qingwen, head of the expert committee on the GIAHS under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, told *Global Times* newspaper.

He added that the successful application was just the beginning and that Deqing will continue to explore pearl culture and promote its global influence.

An arduous journey

Artificial freshwater pearl cultivation in Deqing dates back to the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). It was during that period that Ye Jinyang, a resident of Huzhou Prefecture (modern-day Huzhou City in Zhejiang, to which Deqing belongs), pioneered the technique.

Using the locally-sourced *Cristaria plicata* (commonly known as the cockcomb pearl mussel), Ye successfully cultivated pearls by implanting nuclei—tiny reliefs made of tin, wood, bone or other materials—between the mussel's shell and mantle tissue. Doing so kickstarted a big transition—from relying solely on natural pearls to mastering controlled cultivation techniques.

However, various factors led to a decline in China's artificial freshwater pearl farming technology in modern times.

The story of the "Chinese Pearl" took a turn in 1967 when Shen Zhirong, a 19-year-old fish farmer from Leidian Town in Deqing, embarked on a long and arduous journey to revive the nation's pearl farming heritage.

Through meticulous observation, Shen discovered that triangle sail mussels (*Hyriopsis cumingii*) consistently produced pearls of superior quality,

XINHUA

(Above) A worker at a pearl production company in Deqing County, Zhejiang Province, makes pearl jewelry in a workshop on May 21

Pearl farmers harvest pearl mussels at the Xiaoshanyang Freshwater Pearl Ecological Farming Base in Deqing on May 21

XINHUA

boasting a whiter and brighter luster compared with those from other mussel species. This realization led him to focus his efforts on the selective cultivation of these unique mussels.

In the mid-1970s, Shen successfully developed artificial breeding techniques for triangle sail mussels. This achievement laid the foundation for China's large-scale freshwater pearl cultivation industry.

But in the early 2000s, a crisis emerged in Deqing's pearl farming industry. In an attempt to boost pearl production and shorten breeding cycles, some farmers resorted to adding chicken manure, bird droppings and pig manure to the water as food for phytoplankton, resulting in severe water pollution.

Too much nutrients in the water can cause algae blooms, and algae can use up the oxygen in the water, suffocating other life in the water such as fish. Mussels are natural water purifiers, consuming algae and fish waste and absorbing excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus.

Traditionally, Deqing's farmers used fish-mussel co-culture system, under which fish waste fertilizes phytoplankton, which mussels consume while simultaneously cultivating pearls. To reduce pollution, in recent years, Deqing has re-embraced the traditional ecologically friendly fish-mussel co-culture practices and created a comprehensive pearl industry chain, prioritizing the wellbeing of its ecology and people.

Though this ecological approach extends pearl growth cycle to five to six years, compared with the one- to two-year cycle under intensive farming, it does greatly improve water quality.

Deep-processing innovation

While pearls are commonly associated with jewelry, in reality, only a small fraction, approximately 5 percent, of artificially cultured pearls are ultimately selected for jewelry production.

Shen understood that relying solely on jewelry production would hinder the long-term sustainability of pearl farming. Consequently, he began exploring the possibilities of deep pearl processing, seeking to maximize the value of remaining pearl resources through the development of cosmetics and health products. In 1992, Shen founded the Osmun Group, which has since grown into an enterprise encompassing pearl farming, pearl cosmetics, pearl health products, pearl jewelry and pearl-themed cultural tourism.

Today, Deqing's annual deep pearl processing output approaches 100 tons, or about 10 percent of the national total. This accomplishment positions Deqing as the largest freshwater pearl deep-processing base in China. The county's combined annual output value of pearl farming and deep processing exceeds 7 billion yuan ($974 million), and the sector employs nearly 20,000 people, around 4 percent of the county's population.

Committed to preserving this invaluable agricultural heritage, Osmun has invested 200 million yuan ($28 million) in the creation of a pearl culture park in Deqing. Within the park's Osmun Pearl Museum, visitors can immerse themselves in the origin, culture and history of pearls while uncovering the mysteries of traditional ecological farming techniques.

The Xiaoshanyang Freshwater Pearl Ecological Farming Base in Deqing has also become a popular destination for outdoor educational activities.

Here, children can embark on captivating journeys aboard wooden boats, gliding across the shimmering lake, learning about pearl mussels and opening the mussels to reveal their hidden treasures. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to jijing@cicgamericas.com

From Ancient Wonders to New Energy

Orchid Award judges explore the heart of western China By Wang Ruohan

As part of continued efforts to increase cultural understanding between China and other countries, four international experts embarked on an exploration of Chongqing Municipality and Sichuan Province from May 24 to 27. Dubbed the "Understanding China" tour, the program was organized by China International Communications Group (CICG) for the judges of the second Orchid Awards, whose shortlist of 30 nominees was announced on May 22.

The Orchid Awards are presented to foreign nationals or organizations that have been committed to the promotion of Chinese culture, and have made important contributions to promoting exchange and mutual learning among civilizations. Established by CICG, the awards aim to implement the Global Civilizations Initiative; promote the common values of humanity of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom; consolidate the cultural foundation for building a global community of shared future; and facilitate exchange and mutual learning among civilizations.

These four experts, who are among this year's judges, are Nakano Satoshi, Senior Director of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, Rosalind Oliver, founder and Director of Double Dragon Alliance Cultural Centre in Shanghai, Elsawy Elsawy Ahmed, Coordinator for China Relations and Advisor on China-Egypt Relations at Benha University in Egypt, and Mexican archaeologist and cultural heritage preservation expert Luis Rogelio Rivero Chong.

Open innovation

Chongqing, a city long renowned for its landscape of mountains and rivers, has continuously redefined the concept of "China speed" in the fields of economy and technology, leading the way in western China's development.

The event's first stop was the ChangAn Automobile Global Research and Development Center in Chongqing's Yuzui Town, Jiangbei District, on May 24. ChangAn Automobile sold 536,000 vehicles overseas in 2024, accounting for 20 percent of its total sales. Its vehicles are sold in nearly 100 countries and regions, making it a vivid example of "Made in China" not only going hi-tech but also going global.

"Chinese automobiles, especially new-energy vehicles (NEVs), have developed rapidly in recent years. China's electric vehicles are exported overseas and are very competitive in the international market," Satoshi told *Beijing Review* after the visit. NEVs are automobiles that are fully or predominantly powered by electric energy, including plug-in vehicles, battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and fuel-cell electric vehicles.

How has China's new energy industry developed so rapidly? Xing Ying, an employee at the Corporate Culture Center of ChangAn Automobile, explained to *Beijing Review* the advantages of China's new energy industry: First, China boasts the world's largest NEV market, leading global production and sales for 10 consecutive years. In 2024, its annual NEV production and sales both surpassed 10 million units for the first time. Booming consumer demand has prompted Chinese car companies to continuously launch new products and technologies, driving the global development of the automotive industry. Second, China has its own complete new energy industry chain and supply chain, with over 1 million enterprises in up- and downstream sectors in total. Third, through independent innovation, China has transitioned from a technology follower to a global leader in areas like power batteries and intelligent driving systems.

(Above) International experts of the second Orchid Awards visit ChangAn Automobile Global Research and Development Center in Chongqing Municipality on May 24

International experts of the second Orchid Awards visit the Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, on May 26

COURTESY PHOTO

COURTESY PHOTO

After learning about ChangAn Automobile's efforts in improving global transport experiences, on the same day, the four experts also visited the Inland International Logistics Hub Exhibition Center and Chongqing Container Central Station, two places demonstrating the firm steps western China is taking to expand its openness and accelerate its integration with the world.

As the first city to launch China-Europe freight trains, Chongqing has long been a crucial hub of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since its launch in 2011, the China-Europe Railway Express (Chongqing) has connected nearly 40 countries in Eurasia, running over 15,000 trips, with the total value of transported goods to date surpassing 500 billion yuan ($69.5 billion).

The BRI was proposed by China in 2013 to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes and, according to Oliver, is injecting new vitality into the world economy. With trade being the major driver of global economic recovery today, the role of the BRI is more important than ever, she told *Beijing Review*.

"Egypt is planning to develop land transportation infrastructure, and China will be an indispensable partner, just like the China-Egypt Belt and Road flagship project—the new administrative capital CBD (Central Business District) of Egypt, is a typical example of China's advanced technologies, equipment and experience," Ahmed added. May 24 was the day for Chongqing's weekly drone light show performance. The city prepared a surprise to welcome the Orchid Awards judges, with the awards' logo lighting up the night sky during the show.

Cultural fusion

After Chongqing, the four experts arrived in Chengdu City, capital of Sichuan, on May 25. On that day, the Eastern Suburb Memory cultural park in the city buzzed with activity. Once part of the state-owned Hongguang Electron Tube Factory, this area has been transformed into a creative hub, blending industrial heritage with contemporary culture. Visitors, including local young people and families, enjoy music festivals, art exhibitions, markets and workshops, all embodying Chengdu's unique urban lifestyle.

On their visit to the park, the judges immersed themselves in this lively atmosphere. "This is my first time in Chengdu. Walking through the streets, I feel relaxed. The city's inclusive and open character reminds me of my hometown—Cairo. I think Chengdu and Cairo share many similarities—both are cities where history and modernity coexist harmoniously," Ahmed said.

Sichuan's rich history strikes a contrast with its modern vitality. On May 26, the delegation visited the Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan City of Sichuan. The museum showcases over 1,500 artifacts, including the Bronze Divine Tree, the grand Bronze Longe Standing Figure, and gold masks, captivating visitors from around the world.

Dating back 2,900 to 4,500 years, the Sanxingdui site reveals the splendor of the ancient Shu civilization. These archaeological findings provide strong evidence of the diversity and unity of Chinese civilization and the interactions between ancient Shu and Central Plains cultures. The Central Plains, located in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, is credited as a cradle of Chinese civilization.

The masks are particularly favored by international visitors. Ahmed noted, "The gold masks at Sanxingdui remind me of Egypt's Tutankhamun mask. Both China and Egypt, as ancient civilizations, have produced brilliant cultural achievements over millennia."

Mexican archaeologist Rivero Chong told *Beijing Review*, "This is a magnificent museum, both in scale and significance. The artifacts are outstanding. I look forward to further research to deepen my understanding of this great and mysterious land."

Chongqing and Sichuan are important windows to observe Chinese modernization and civilization. What the judges experienced there is a reflection of China's openness and inclusiveness. "I think it's a wonderful trip. We have seen so much artistry, history, culture; and made new friends. It's been a really diverse and deep kind of experience for learning about civilizations and connections," Oliver concluded. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to wangruohan@cicgamericas.com

From Humble To Hi-Tech

The story of one inland city's rise to an advanced tech hub By Li Wenhan

Hefei City, capital of Anhui Province in east China, is rapidly emerging as one of the country's leading innovation hubs—quickly narrowing the gap with megacities like Beijing and Shanghai. In 2023, *Nature* science journal ranked Hefei 13th in the world for scientific research output, a testament to its growing global influence in science and technology.

In just a few years, the city has replaced vast swathes of abandoned farmland with sprawling technology parks and scientific facilities. Over the past decade alone, Hefei's GDP, a key gauge of economic health and performance, has more than doubled.

The city's journey began in the late 1970s, with the rise of the home appliance industry. Since then, the city has consistently aligned itself with global technological shifts and industrial upgrades. Today, it boasts strong capabilities in next-generation industries such as semiconductors, display technologies, new-energy vehicles (NEVs), smart manufacturing and AI.

NEVs are automobiles that are fully or predominantly powered by electric energy, including plug-in vehicles, battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and fuel-cell electric vehicles.

An innovation hub

The rise of three Chinese companies in particular illustrates Hefei's transformation from an unassuming inland city to a hi-tech powerhouse.

In 2008, Hefei brought in BOE Technology Group, a leading Chinese electronic components manufacturer. Shortly after, the company launched a production line for sixth-generation TFT-LCD display panels in the city—the first of its kind on the Chinese mainland. Today, BOE is a giant with an annual revenue of billions of U.S. dollars, and Hefei is known as a global display industry base.

Nine years ago, ChangXin Memory Technologies was founded in Hefei with an investment of 150 billion yuan ($20 billion) to develop and manufacture memory chips. Today, the city has built an industrial cluster for memory chip making.

In 2020, Hefei managed to raise 7 billion yuan ($970 million) in venture capital and invested the money in cash-strapped electric vehicle (EV) maker NIO. The rescue enabled NIO to overcome an acute liquidity crisis. The company later established its China headquarters in Hefei. After that, globally leading EV companies, such as German automaker Volkswagen and domestic brand BYD, also set up units in the city.

Now, Hefei has formed comparative advantages in NEVs. In 2023, the city produced 740,000 NEVs, ranking fourth in China.

Looking ahead, Hefei is investing in future industries, including the low-altitude economy (defined as economic activities in airspace below 1,000 meters), aerospace information, quantum information and fusion energy. The city has a cluster of 100-plus aerospace enterprises. It is also home to China's first national quantum information-themed sci-tech park for future industries, boasting a leading number of quantum patent authorizations nationwide.

Its proactive approach to strategic investment has earned Hefei the nickname "city of venture capital." The "Hefei model" is characterized by government-led investments in cutting-edge sectors and the creation of innovation platforms and incubators, such as Zhongke Hefei Institute of Technology Innovation Engineering, which provide support to research teams in commercializing their technological innovations.

Hefei's development path also features building the industrial chain around a leading company. Volkswagen's research and development (R&D) arm in China, Volkswagen Group (China) Technology Co. (VCTC), which was officially launched in Hefei in 2024, is now the company's largest R&D facility outside of Germany. It focuses on intelligent and connected vehicles for the Chinese market.

Industrial robot arms at work inside a Volkswagen workshop in Hefei, Anhui Province, on May 21

So far, over 500 production suppliers and more than 1,000 general purchasing suppliers have joined Volkswagen's ecosystem in Anhui. The company has attracted 50 of them to set up operations in Hefei itself as well as nearby areas.

"Our new platform, developed by VCTC, will enable 30-percent faster speed to market and reduce the overall production cost by approximately 40 percent," Shao Jian, chief human resources officer of Volkswagen Smart E-Mobility Hub, told a media group that was conducting a survey of Hefei's development trajectory on May 21. "This is the result of cooperation between our R&D teams and local partners."

Talent development has been another key pillar of Hefei's growth. The city produces over 100,000 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) graduates annually from institutions like the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC).

Central Government policies encourage collaboration between enterprises, universities and research institutes. Such partnerships have played a pivotal role in turning scientific achievements into technological innovations.

Volkswagen, for instance, launched the Volkswagen College program in collaboration with Hefei University, and introduced Germany's dual-education model to train students in the likes of mechanical engineering and software development.

A comfortable life

Hefei has been working actively to attract foreign talent in an effort to boost the city's innovation capacity. In recent years, an increasing number of international professionals have chosen to settle down in Hefei, drawn by its potential and growing reputation as a sci-tech hub.

From 2019 to 2021, Hefei was named one of the most attractive Chinese cities for foreign experts, a recognition that reflects its improving quality of life, welcoming environment and expanding opportunities.

Miroslav Khula, CEO of Volkswagen Anhui, shared his impressions with the media group. "When I'm not in the office, I usually go running or cycling around the hi-tech zone," he told *Beijing Review*. After just five months in the city, Khula found it easy to feel at home, thanks to Hefei's natural surroundings, strong sense of community and openness. "Hefei is a city where we want to live, and we're really enjoying our time here," he said, describing life with his family.

WEI YAO

Khula's experience is increasingly common among foreign professionals in Hefei. Kim Seok-ro, an air conditioning performance specialist from the Republic of Korea who works for Chinese home appliance giant Midea Group, has called Hefei home since 2017. Originally planning to stay for a decade, Kim has decided to extend his time in the city due to his team's continued growth. "As long as the company needs me, I won't leave," he said.

"This is my eighth year at Midea," Kim said during a meeting with the media group on May 21. "It has turned out quite differently from what I expected—especially since it was my first time working in China. But once I moved to Hefei, I found that life and work here have gone surprisingly smoothly. I was initially worried about issues like healthcare and the education of my children, but Hefei has developed very well in those areas."

Fan Jin, head of the Hefei Municipal Bureau of Science and Technology, emphasized the growing international presence in the city. "Over 1,500 foreign experts from 74 countries are contributing to Hefei's economic and social development," Fan said at a forum gathering international experts from across the globe on May 20.

Fan highlighted the essential role overseas professionals play—not only in driving innovation, but also in strengthening international cooperation and advancing China's modernization efforts.

Among those contributing to Hefei's academic and research community is Clause Thomas Weise, a German professor of applied optimization at the School of AI and Big Data at Hefei University. Weise spoke highly of the city's upgraded infrastructure and rising quality of life. "I feel deeply grateful for the opportunities and support that I and my colleagues have received from local institutions and enterprises," he said.

"What I really appreciate about being here is the positive outlook on the future. There's a shared goal to keep improving—not just for oneself, but as a society. People here generally believe that each year should be better than the last. I really admire that mindset," Weise said. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to liwenhan@cicgamericas.com

My Wedding, My Way

How young Chinese are reinventing the matrimony ceremony By Yuan Yuan

What began as an unexpected twist turned into a memorable celebration for a couple in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, who ended up holding their wedding at a hotpot restaurant—where diners cook raw ingredients in a simmering pot of broth.

The bride, surnamed Zhao, told newspaper *Guangming Daily* that they had originally booked another restaurant for their wedding. However, just five days before the big day, the restaurant abruptly informed them it was closing down, forcing the couple to scramble for a new venue.

Zhao then turned her eyes to a hotpot chain known for its solid service and good food. "I remember joking once while dining there that maybe I could host my wedding here—I never imagined that it would actually happen," she said.

To their delight, the hotpot restaurant accepted their booking and enthusiastically prepared for the event. The spacious venue, which can accommodate up to 500 guests, was perfect for their 150 attendees.

The wedding feast's cost of 22,500 yuan ($3,100) was more affordable than their original plan, and guests thoroughly enjoyed the experience. To add to the festivities, Zhao and her husband even performed a pre-rehearsed lion dance.

"Many friends said they'd also consider hosting their weddings at a hotpot restaurant," Zhao said. "The festive decorations arranged by the restaurant were lovely, and we were very satisfied."

New choices

Other than a hotpot restaurant, some couples have opted for fast-food chains like McDonald's for their ceremonies. Last September, a couple in Guangdong Province held their wedding at McDonald's, as the restaurant had been the backdrop of their relationship—from dating to proposal. The celebration featured burgers, French fries, Coca-Cola, a McNugget bouquet, and even Coke champagne, all for just around 3,000 yuan ($410).

According to social networking platform Soul App's 2025 Z-Generation Wedding Attitudes Insight Report, 78 percent of single young adults have planned their ideal weddings, as GenZs reject rigid tradition in favor of self-expression. Many find conventional weddings exhausting, with high costs and complicated arrangements ranging from banquets and venue selection to photography, decor and hosting.

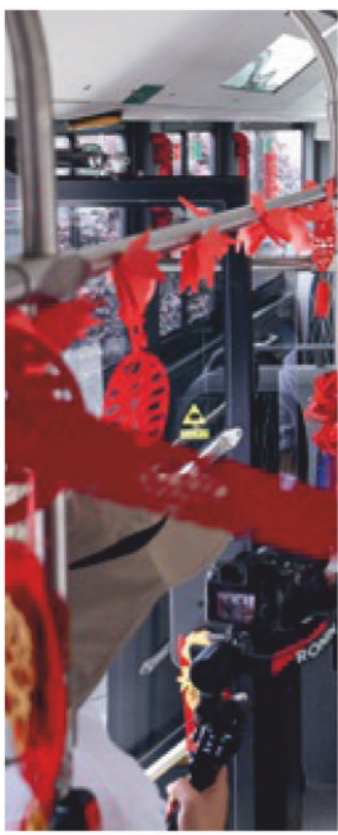
The report revealed that over 40 percent of respondents prefer simple weddings, focusing on creating a relaxed atmosphere for themselves and their guests. Luxury hotels and other high-end venues are no longer the optimal options, while fast-food chains, cafés and boutique homestays—spaces where young people naturally gather, are becoming popular alternatives.

Some couples have swapped flashy luxury car processions for buses, e-bikes or even shared bicycles. Others toast with milk tea instead of alcohol. These new-style weddings may be smaller and simpler, but they retain warmth and joy. The report shows that intimate, personalized and tailor-made wedding experiences are rising trends among young consumers.

"These unconventional choices reflect the GenZ pursuit of individuality, demonstrating a broader societal shift toward self-expression," Shanghai University sociologist Chen Wei told newspaper *Beijing Daily*. "Increasingly, prioritizing personal happiness and celebrating individual identity are becoming the new norm."

In April, a popular influencer with millions of followers hosted a Cardcaptor Sakura-themed wedding. Cardcaptor Sakura is a beloved Japanese magical girl anime.

When the bride, dressed in an elaborate wedding gown and holding a magical wand, appeared at the center of a pink stage illuminated with a glowing magic circle, netizens marveled:



Newlyweds pose for photos aboard their specially chartered "Love Bus" in Zhuji, Zhejiang Province, on April 30

XINHUA

"This is exactly what a *shoujo* manga 'final scene' (referring to the romantic climax in comics targeting teenage girls) should look like!"

According to the 2023-24 Wedding Market Trends and Consumer Insights report, released by the China Wedding Expo in 2024, modern couples prioritize quality and intricate designs, with themes ranging from gothic and dark romance to eco-friendly ones gaining popularity. AI technology also plays a role, allowing couples to preview wedding setups and incorporate more customized elements while reducing costs by 10-15 percent compared with traditional weddings.

This shift isn't just about aesthetics—it's fueling fresh business models, with new players quickly entering the market. In Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, a young couple ordered 320 cups of milk tea to replace traditional alcoholic toasts during their wedding reception. Currently, popular tea brands like Heytea and Chagee have launched wedding banquet services, offering complete packages including custom packaging, delivery and setup services, carving out a new niche in wedding customization.

New styles

Alongside innovative wedding trends, "New Chinese-style" weddings reviving ancient traditions like ceremonial attire and rituals are gaining popularity among young couples. However, even when embracing tradition, today's youth prefer to keep things simple and meaningful. Across China, collective weddings with traditional elements have become a trendy alternative.

On April 30, a couple in Zhejiang Province made headlines by boarding a public bus (exclusive for their wedding procession with no other passengers aboard) dressed in classic red wedding robes, and traveling to an ancestral hall in a village of Zhuji City for their ceremony. There, they held a traditional wedding steeped in local customs.

Every ritual carried deep cultural significance, including a "liquor-sealing ceremony." The groomsmen presented a jar of locally brewed liquor, which the couple then sealed with red paper and a "love lock," vowing to reopen it on their 50th anniversary.

Another couple, Xiang Jintao and his bride, chose a countryside wedding in a village in Shengzhou City of Zhejiang, a move aligned with the city's push for frugal yet culturally vibrant weddings.

Shengzhou has designated seven scenic venues for minimalist ceremonies, including rural art galleries and Yueju Opera-themed towns.

The couple tied the knot at the Liu Wenxi Art Gallery, hometown of the renowned painter Liu Wenxi, whose lifelong love story inspired them. "We chose this place not just for the landscape, but also because Liu and his wife's devotion moved us," Xiang told newspaper *People's Daily*.

The gallery's rustic charm set the scene, while quirky local touches like Cantonese Opera-inspired fridge magnets and toffee made with fragrant Torreya nuts added a sense of playful modernity to the festivities. "This perfect blend of timeless tradition and frugal creativity makes our wedding uniquely meaningful," Xiang said. **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to yuanyuan@cicgamericas.com

CHINA MOSAIC

Weekly video commentary direct from Beijing

中国3分钟

中国网

Scan to watch China Mosaic

china.com.cn china.org.cn

中国儿童少年基金会
CHINA CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS' FUND

WECHAT QR CODE

SPRING BUD PROJECT

TOGETHER LET'S HELP LITTLE FLOWERS BLOSSOM

Celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival

The Dragon Boat Festival, or Duanwu Festival, falls on the fifth day of the fifth month on the traditional Chinese calendar. The festival can be traced back more than 2,000 years and legends about its origins abound.

The most well-known is that the festival commemorates Qu Yuan, a patriotic poet and minister living in the Warring States period some 2,300 years ago. Distraught over the invasion of his homeland, Qu threw himself into a river in despair. Local people racing out in boats to save him is said to be the origin of dragon boat races. When they were unable to find him, they threw balls of sticky rice into the river, hoping the fish would eat the rice instead of his body. This is said to be the origin of *zongzi*—sticky rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves—that are now enjoyed during the festival. The festival, a public holiday in China, fell on May 31 this year. **BR**

(*Photos by Xinhua News Agency*)

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to yanwei@cicgamericas.com

1. Drummers keep the teams rowing in unison during practice races ahead of the Dragon Boat Festival on Xuanwu Lake in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, on May 24

2. Two students perform a dragon dance while learning about the Dragon Boat Festival at a primary school in Qingdao, Shandong Province, on June 10, 2024

3. A red date *zongzi* is wrapped in preparation for steaming in a food factory in Zunhua, Hebei Province, on May 22

4. Ancient superstition suggests the fifth day of the fifth month on the traditional Chinese calender can be unlucky, and decorations stuffed with pungent herbs, such as these ones pictured in Ningjing County, Gansu Province, on May 24, are said to ward off misfortune

2

4

3

Reversing Outdated Escalator Etiquette

LI SHIGONG

Recently, small footprint stickers have appeared on escalators in some subway stations in Beijing. Subway operators say these "footprints" are placed there to remind passengers they don't have to "stand on the right and walk on the left" of escalators but can instead stand side-by-side with another passenger.

"Stand on the right and walk on the left" was once regarded as a symbol of caring for others, with escalator users standing on the right side to leave the left side open for people in a hurry. After years of widespread adoption, the inherent safety flaws of this convention have become increasingly apparent and are triggering doubts about its possible merits.

Jiang Debin (*Workers' Daily*): Escalators were not initially designed for pedestrian traffic, so walking on them can easily lead to imbalance or even accidents. Furthermore, prolonged weight on a single side can hasten the deterioration of an escalator's mechanics, creating a greater possibility of equipment failure and potential safety hazards.

In 2018, Beijing Subway dropped the "right and left" recommendation and now encourages passengers to hold the handrail and watch their step on escalators. Other big cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing and Chengdu have also abandoned "stand on the right and walk on the left" guidance. This seemingly tiny adjustment reflects consideration for escalator safety.

Of course, long-held habits, particularly those regarded as proper etiquette, are hard to break.

The cute design of the tiny footprint stickers in Beijing is meant to use gentle visual language to replace rigid safety reminders, allowing passengers to gradually adopt a new concept of civility. This experience is worth emulating in more places. Furthermore, the significance of the new footprint stickers, as well as the safety hazards of "standing on the right and walking on the left" should be more widely promoted through a variety of channels to gradually increase public awareness and acceptance of the new guidance.

Zhao Zhijiang (ThePaper.cn): Despite clear messaging in many cities that "stand on the right and walk on the left" is neither safe nor necessary, many people have not adapted to the new guidance yet, requiring subway operators to use signage to remind them. The downsides of the "right and left" guidance are apparent, but it has already become ingrained in many people's minds. Even those who already recognize its potential risks often feel pressured to comply, fearing scrutiny from others.

Some passengers, while walking up the escalator, demand that other passengers make way, sometimes even rudely pushing those in front of them aside. This places moral pressure on those "blocking the way," who feel they are hindering others' passage. Thus the "right and left" guidance is not only unsafe but also reduces overall efficiency. The correct posture is to stand side-by-side with another passenger and hold on tight.

The old escalator guidance was initially intended to benefit passengers in a hurry, but how much time can be saved on subway and shopping mall escalators? Why should the rightful interests of the majority be compromised to cater to the needs or preferences of a small fraction? In this sense, the yellow footprint stickers on escalators undeniably help reverse an improper old habit, as well as give a subtle prompt: It's acceptable to stand side-by-side on escalators and you don't need to feel guilty about doing so. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments panxiaoqiao@cicgamericas.com

Beijing Review Vol.68 No.1 January 2, 2025

by Beijing Review (Author) Format: Kindle Edition

See all formats and editions

Kindle
$0.99

Read with Our Free App

Beijing Review **is China's only national English newsweekly published by China International Communications Group Center for the Americas.**

Product Details

ASIN: BOBTKKP3G4
Publisher: Beijing Review (January 2, 2025)
Publication Date: January 2, 2025
Language: English
File Size: 1396 KB
Text-to-Speech: Enabled
Screen Reader: Supported
Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled
X-Ray: Not Enabled
Word Wise: Enabled
Sticky Notes: On Kindle Scribe
Print Length: 90 pages

Now available on amazon

In addition to *Beijing Review*, CICG Americas publishes *China Hoy*, a monthly publication launched in 1960, aiming to bridge the gap between China and the Spanish-speaking world—particularly Latin American countries.

Website: www.chinahoy.com.cn